CLINTON'S ROAD FROM NOWHERE—THE EDITORS

JUNE 28, 1993 · $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Drip, Drip, Drip...

Boutros-Ghali, Architect of U.N. Failure
Michael Lind

Midwifing Murder in Cambodia
Amitav Ghosh

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

A Million Drowning Children

Irving Harris, the well-known businessman, philanthropist and child advocate, tells a parable about some people picnicking beside a river. Suddenly they see an enormous number of babies being carried down the river by the current. Their first impulse is to jump in and pull out as many of the babies as possible. But the kids keep coming, and the rescuers can't save them all. Finally, someone is smart enough to run up the river to see who is pushing them in.

Like most parables, this is rich in meaning. But Harris intends it as a comment on the way we handle the problem of disadvantaged children—particularly those born to unmarried mothers who may not have wanted them in the first place and who don't give them the nurturing children need. Our primary intervention is the education system. In "Education—Does It Make a Difference When You Start?" (*Aspen Quarterly*, Spring 1993)—and in an even more hard-hitting speech, "Primary Prevention vs. Intervention"—Harris calls this too little, too late.

Harris points out that we spend a great deal on education. Yet even middle-class children do not achieve at the same levels as youngsters in other industrialized countries, and disadvantaged children do much worse. In some cities, half the students drop out, and many who graduate don't have the skills to get a decent job or to benefit from college.

We hear many ideas about how to help the education system succeed with these youngsters. But even if we gave schools every imaginable resource, Harris says, it would still be like jumping into the water to save kids who are already drowning. We must go on trying, but we are kidding ourselves if we think that improving K-12 education is enough to solve the problem.

Even if we gave schools every imaginable resource, it would still be like jumping into the water to save kids who are already drowning.

Research shows that the brain develops most rapidly during a child's first year. Babies who don't get the food and health care they need are likely to be slow to develop and may be permanently harmed—long before they are old enough even to enroll in Head Start. Harris cites a study that found an astonishing 12 percent of preschoolers to be learning-impaired because of preventable causes like malnutrition, lead poisoning and abuse and neglect.

But a child's physical well-being is not the only issue. Babies need parents who make them feel secure and loved, and "a poor, single mother—especially a teen mother—who starts off with low self-esteem and lacks security...may find it difficult to teach the baby, through consistent caring and interaction, that the baby is safe and loved." Youngsters who do not get this nurturing are likely to enter kindergarten unprepared—and begin a spiral of failure that lasts throughout their school careers and beyond.

These poor kids are not the only ones who pay for their lack of readiness. The kindergarten teachers Harris talked to said they could handle one such child without "shortchanging" the others, but if they had more than one, the learning of every child in the class suffered. This means we have an enormous national problem. In 1990, 28 percent of American babies—over one million—were born to unmarried women, many of whom were children themselves and had no job and no understanding of what it means to raise a child. By 1995, the figure will be one-third. In how many classrooms will all the children suffer because one child is not ready?

The consequences of ignoring these youngsters are frightening for the kids themselves and for the rest of us, but there is no magic bullet. We must begin working, Harris says, to create a social climate in which early sexual activity and childbearing are condemned instead of being widely accepted as they are now. And because he believes that children who are unplanned and unwanted are at greatest risk, Harris says that birth control information and abortions must be as readily available for poor women as they are for wealthy women. Taken together, these measures might reduce the number of high-risk babies to 500,000 a year.

We could then devote our resources to creating a system that would give these 500,000 children—and their parents—the help they need from the beginning of the children's lives. Such a system might cost $10 billion a year, but it is a fraction of what we now spend on education, and it would be much less than it costs to deal with the results of our continuing neglect.

As important as education is, Harris tells us, it cannot take the place of social policy in dealing with a million drowning children. There are people who will strongly disagree with Harris's plan, but his analysis of the problem—and of what we face if we don't deal with it—demands everyone's attention.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1993 by Albert Shanker.

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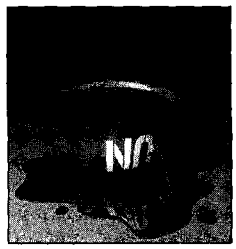

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CORRESPONDENCE

The meaning of Meaning

To the editors:

I knew I was in trouble when the magazine that epitomizes disembodied elitist cynicism, THE NEW REPUBLIC, decided to address *Tikkun* (Notebook, May 3). The editors were twitting Hillary Rodham Clinton's adoption of *Tikkun*'s "politics of meaning." The first lady had given a speech on April 6 in which she addressed what she described as the "alienation, despair and hopelessness" that lie "not very far from the surface," and had asserted that America needs a new ethos of human caring and love to replace the ethos of selfishness that has dominated American politics for the past decades.

Soon thereafter Ms. Clinton invited me to the White House to discuss whether our shared politics of meaning could be transformed into specific policy recommendations at this point in the Clinton presidency and how to deal with the media cynicism that would inevitably greet anyone who proposed that human beings could be motivated by something more than material self-interest.

The right already had its politics of meaning. While former President Carter busied himself with policy wonkery, the right won the country to its larger vision of the good, and then took power. Its task was made easy because liberals, fearful that the First Amendment would be violated if values were debated in public, never articulated a moral framework or social vision that could counter the right's. The notion that the right could be "pro-family" or "pro-values" while supporting the very social and economic institutions that encourage moral relativism, "looking out for No. 1" and "winning through intimidation" had seemed plausible only because the liberals themselves had totally abandoned the concern about values to the right. Hence, the right could have it both ways—denouncing the deterioration of values and family life, while supporting the institutions responsible for the problem—while the liberals ignored these social issues and focused entirely on economic entitlements and political rights for the most deprived.

By addressing the crisis in values and family life, the right was speaking to a deeper level of problem that faced many Americans. While serving as a psychotherapist at the Oakland-based Institute for Labor and Mental Health in the late '70s and '80s, I discovered that many working people, while quite concerned about economic security and grateful for the way that Democrats fight for basic economic benefits, are scared about the disintegration of family life, fearful that their kids are too materialistic and too selfish, worried that the decline of values will translate into higher levels of crime and violence, and vaguely aware that there has been a general decline in friendships and communal solidarity. The decline of unions and solidarity at work has been matched by a decline of neighborhoods and social solidarity everywhere else. They don't believe that these issues will be addressed by liberal economic entitlement programs—even middle-class entitlements, though they welcome those.

The right seemed to care about all this—and seemed to understand that human beings have a deeper set of needs than economic entitlements or political rights. Most humans need to have their lives make sense—they need to be part of a community of meaning and purpose that transcends the selfishness of the marketplace and that roots them in ethically and spiritually sensitive communities that have a higher moral purpose. This hunger for purpose and community was what fueled people's attachment to the New Deal, because the Democrats helped people see themselves as part of some larger morally based "we" that they were all in together.

That same sense of moral vision and higher purpose infused the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement and the women's movement. But that hunger for community and purpose could also lead people to right-wing or even fascistic directions. As liberal politics began to deconstruct its own universal vision and replace it with a cacophony of oppressed groups that could no longer share a universal moral critique, it began to appear to be little more than an assemblage of interest groups seeking to maximize their own benefits. The right was able to present itself as the one voice that cared about the American majority—those whose form of oppression was more related to the deprivation of meaning than to the deprivation of rights or money.

THE NEW REPUBLIC believes that these issues have no place in politics—they should be confined to religion or personal life, possibly to private psychotherapy. But most Americans intuitively understood that it was something about the social order that was causing the decline in community values and the instability in families. While the liberals seemed to be saying to most Americans that these were their own personal problems and they had no one else to blame but themselves, the right was offering a reduction of self-blaming by arguing that these were social problems (though their specific analysis of the causes focused on blaming some Other, such as gays, blacks, feminists, tax-and-spend liberals).

My research had revealed that deskilling in the world of work, the reorganization of the workplace in ways that increased productivity or profit by decreasing for most workers the degree to which they could use their intelligence and creativity, had produced higher levels of alienation. But since Americans accepted meritocratic assumptions about work, they tended to blame themselves for having unfulfilling work, and the resulting anger and shame frequently interfered with relationships in personal life. Moreover, the commodification of nearly everything, the economic rewards for selfishness and objectification of the other as an object to be manipulated so that you can sell yourself or your product, the fostering of a marketplace mentality in human relationships that encouraged people to treat each other as discardable products, tended to foster narcissistic personalities unlikely to sustain loving relationships or to be moved by ethical or spiritual values.

But will a progressive politics of meaning simply be an appeal for government to get into the business of dictating meaning and purpose from the top? That's how reporter Michael Kelly tried to portray it in his demeaning portrait of Hillary Clinton (and, incidentally, of me) in his *New York Times Magazine* article—by calling our view "a politics of virtue." Kelly wanted us to appear to be thinking that we were in a morally higher or purer place than the American masses who we supposedly think need to be cleansed by us. By portraying us as exhibiting the same elitist stench that discredited President Carter (remember his "malaise" speech, with its assumption that he was fine but the American people were in a funk?), Kelly and other media cynics have tried to discredit our politics of meaning.

But Hillary Clinton and I have nothing of the sort in mind. Our contention is not that people need to be purified, by government or anyone else, but that they already have a desire for mutual recognition, caring for others and being part of communities of ethical and spiritual meaning. The goal of government is not to impose or shape a community of meaning, but to eliminate the existing economic, social and governmental obstacles to the realization of those desires that already exist among so many Americans, and to do so in a way that does not privilege any one community of meaning over another.

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I believe in the free marketplace of ideas, ethical approaches, spiritual worldviews. None should be privileged by the state. But for this marketplace to work, we need a level playing field—and an elimination of those social, economic and governmental practices that reward selfishness, narcissism and power obsessions while disadvantaging those who act from moral principle or spiritual sensitivity. And in a society that already tilts toward selfishness, we may temporarily need a governmental affirmative action program for policies that tend to encourage cooperation, caring for others, moral and ecological sensitivity and empathy.

President Clinton's waning popularity is a result of a vicious media assault on some of his minor mistakes, and on the parts of him that vacillate about how much to fight for his principles. If self-interest could really be transcended by a community commitment to morality, caring and social responsibility, each of us would have to re-evaluate some of the ways we personally have opted for self-interest at the expense of principles we hold. Easier, then, to be "shocked" at Clinton's failures, demanding of him a moral perfection that we can't find in ourselves. By joining TNR's cynicism, by buying its tragic view of life as necessarily morally flawed, by assuming that people who seek to change that must either be covert totalitarians or mushy sentimentalists, we let ourselves off the moral hook and, relieved (though also slightly depressed), return to a life free of any hope or any demand for moral community. A better alternative: compassionately criticize Clinton's failings, but support him to live up to his highest moral ideals rather than ridicule the aspirations, support the part of him that already wants to be more serious about a politics of meaning.

MICHAEL LERNER
Editor, Tikkun
New York, New York

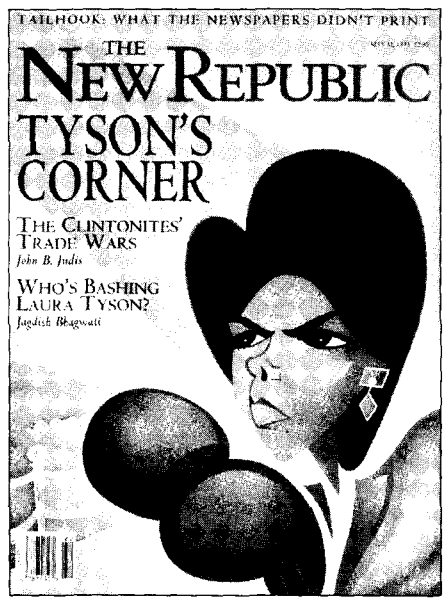
Round three

To the editors:

Mickey Kaus's response to Allan Peskin's point about the Constitution not mentioning democracy is a bit too flippant (Correspondence, May 10). He relies on the Constitution's references to a "right to vote" and its guarantee of a Republican Form of Government for the proposition that the Constitution at least mentions representative democracy. Kaus wins only if "mentioning" is all we are really talking about. If, as I suspect, he wishes to contend that representative democracy is woven into the fabric of the Constitution, his arguments fall short.

The Constitution's references to a "right to vote" are proscriptive, not prescriptive. In other words, the Constitution forbids reasons for denying the right to vote, but never positively grants such a right. Absent those proscriptions, federal electors need only "have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature" (Article I, Section 2). Amendment 17, providing for popular election of senators, offers but the same protection. And presidential electors, although all now chosen by popular vote, could be chosen by any method a state legislature might choose (Article II, Section 1).

Nor may Kaus huddle under Article IV's guarantee to each state of a "Republican Form of Government." The Supreme Court has found the clause judicially unenforceable. And more



importantly, if Kaus believes that by "Republican Form of Government" the founders meant representative democracy, then he should add Gordon Wood's *Creation of the American Republic* to his shouldn't-have-missed-it-in-law-school list.

PATRICK HUGHES
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:

Any one of Mickey Kaus's modest proposals for greater parliamentarianism in America ("The Madison Curse," TRB, May 31) would necessitate at least a constitutional amendment, if not a convention. The "team ticket" idea violates Article I, Section 2, Clause 1, as well as Section 3, Clause 1 as amended, as well as a good portion of Article II as amended. The Yeltsin Solution probably violates the whole of Article I. The no-confidence vote is not an option according to Article II, Section 4, which provides a method for removal of the president, impeachment. Kaus concludes by observing that "none of these reforms will happen ... while Clinton is around." Does he seriously think Bill Clinton has something to do with impeding this type of change? The "reforms" Kaus proposes would change the fundamental nature of our republic. The Framers abhorred parliamentarianism and structured our government so as to make tyranny of the majority unlikely. Perhaps "gridlock" is the price we pay for that.

CHARLES M. HART
Haddonfield, New Jersey

Serbian roulette

To the editors:

In addition to playing what Niall Ferguson called "the far more important game of blackmailing the West for aid" ("Europa Nervosa," May 31), Russia has strong geopolitical and economic incentives not to abet Serbian ambitions in Bosnia: to wit, the need to placate the five Central Asian republics, all historically Muslim and current CIS members. By going beyond smuggled armaments to the Serbs, a few supernationalist military volunteers and mild pro-Serbian rhetoric in Bosnia, Russia would play into the hand of the Islamic fundamentalists and alienate the majority of rational Muslims living in these five republics, where more than 60 percent of the population is non-Russian.

The Russian dreams of empire in Europe died two and more generations ago, but those of empire in Asia are still warm.

BARTON S. PULLING
Pocatello, Idaho

You're killing me

To the editors:

Ann Hulbert's Washington Diarist about names in ironic places struck a vein ("Name Calling," May 24). I was taught pathology by Dr. Butcher, pediatrics by Dr. Pane, and otolaryngology by Dr. Bill Fee. My residency colleague, Dr. Turbow, never tired and is now an intensivist. One of my first students this year was an intern with the unfortunate moniker: Dr. Killam.

STEPHEN J. HARRIS, M.D.
Menlo Park, California

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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NEWS DIGEST//(press CTRL-X for full text, <ESC> to cancel):

Clinton inaugurated . . . Babbitt named Attorney General . . . Homosexuals-in-military decision postponed. Gay groups protest . . . Restrictions on Haitian immigrants loosened . . . Clinton plans to slash entitlements . . . Bosnian intervention set. (CTRL-X)
3/30/93 Commentary/Anthony Lewis/*New York Times*: "At last, we have a President who cares. He has heard the suffering of the desperate Bosnian Muslims. He has heard the voice of Elie Wiesel. And he has acted, decisively, in contrast to the empty clucking of his predecessors." <ESC>

U.S., Britain bomb Bosnian Serb positions, ammunition depots . . . 400 Haitians lost at sea. 20,000 arrive on Florida beaches . . . Clinton seen as caught up in details. (CTRL-X)
4/15/93 Ann Devroy/*Washington Post*: "After watching President Clinton's tumultuous first months in office, a senior administration official said, 'It's like he's cramming for an exam and thinks any little thing can trip him up.' Even as bombs were falling in Bosnia, the aide noted, the wonkish Clinton took four hours to pore over the law review articles of his top choice for a midlevel civil rights post at the Justice Department—someone he already knew personally. 'The footnotes too,' said the frustrated aide. 'Can you believe it? He read the footnotes.'" <ESC>

5,000 Massacred; Towns Destroyed. (CTRL-X)
4/18/93 Reuters: "An estimated 5,000 Muslims were reportedly pulled from their homes in the Bosnian town of Banja Luka and shot to death yesterday by Serbian militiamen angered by allied bombing of their positions. It was the worst massacre of the year-old civil war in the former Yugoslav republic. Meanwhile, in Eastern Bosnia, panicked Serb units retreating toward Belgrade massed and flattened three remaining Muslim enclaves. A U.N. relief convoy was destroyed near the town of Tuzla, killing 45 Danish and Swedish drivers." <ESC>

Clinton Bosnian policy in tatters. (CTRL-X)
4/24/93 David Von Drehle/*Washington Post*: "Some days, being president is all glamour and glory; the world is an HBO special and you are the star. Some days it is all frustration and ambiguity." <ESC> (CTRL-X)
4/24/93 Thomas L. Friedman/*New York Times*/Week in Review: "The tragedies in the Balkans and in the seas off Haiti have left the Clinton White House in a state of near shock. But these events should not have been such surprises to experts steeped in the history of the two regions. President Clinton campaigned as a man who had thought through every wrinkle of policy. Yet his White House seems to have forgotten to ask the most basic of questions: If we do X, and they do Y, what happens next? In Bosnia, this failure has left Mr. Clinton in an exquisite bind. He can escalate, introducing American ground troops—something he has pledged to avoid. Or he can reconcile himself to the fact that his attempts at humanitarian intervention have produced bloody, unforeseen consequences." <ESC>

Clinton reverses Haiti policy; Bosnian pullback seen . . . Dole denounces proposed Social Security cuts . . . Gergen calls for hiring of "wise man" . . . Clinton steps up campaign for rights nominee. (CTRL-X)
5/20/93 David Von Drehle/*Washington Post*: "In some ways, Washington politics is like a video game. You are rewarded for pushing the right buttons. But Bill Clinton has been pushing the wrong ones lately." <ESC> (CTRL-X)
5/23/93 Commentary/Evans & Novak: "President Clinton's erstwhile allies in Congress are astonished that he has chosen to stick up for Lani Guinier, his controversial nominee to the Justice Department's top civil rights post. 'He doesn't know when to cut his losses,' one anguished Democrat lamented to us. Even the president's friends worry that this decision, which can only prolong and intensify the Guinier battle, symbolizes deeper problems, especially the dominating backstage influence of the president's wife, Hillary.

"'They miss Stephanopoulos,' one aide told us, referring to Clinton's brilliant ex-adviser. White House insiders are unanimous in their nostalgia for the smooth handlers of his winning campaign. But the days when the Clinton machine programmed the smallest details—right down to the cut and color of the candidate's hair—are gone. Now the president's unkempt appearance is deemed the physical manifestation of the chaos in his administration. 'Doesn't he have anybody who can tell him to stop for an hour and get a haircut?' a disillusioned Clinton supporter confided." <ESC>

Moynihan denounces proposed Social Security cuts . . . White House fails to achieve staff reductions. (CTRL-X)
6/1/93 Editorial/*The New Republic*: "It is essential that Clinton act on his New Democratic promise to streamline the government. For symbolic and substantive reasons, this effort must begin with the White House itself. For example, it currently employs *seven* people who make travel arrangements for the pampered press. Are they necessary? In this, as in all other matters, from now until the end of time, Clinton should listen to his vice president, Al Gore." <ESC> (CTRL-X)
6/4/93 David Von Drehle/*Washington Post*: "Sometimes the government is like a big quilting bee." <ESC>

Perot denounces proposed Social Security cuts . . . Deaver appointed White House communications director. (CTRL-X)
6/5/93 R.W. Apple Jr./*New York Times*: "Can't anybody here play this game? That's what Casey Stengel once asked of the 1962 New York Mets. But now politicians in the capital, including many Democrats, are asking it about the Clinton Administration. Beset by policy reversals over Bosnia and Haiti, mired in a seemingly endless struggle to fill a third-tier Justice Department slot, the youthful Clinton aides seem to have forgotten the hard lessons of Vietnam—if they ever learned them—and of the 1992 campaign: It's the economy, stupid! 'Old Kennedy hands would have done everything much better,' said one old Kennedy hand.

"The President himself appeared to confirm as much when he belatedly joined his dinner guests Thursday night. One reporter had already finished six courses of the eight-course meal and was on his second bottle of 1986 Chateau La Gurgue Margaux when the President walked in, sat down and strangely skipped the cheese course. He nevertheless argued that his presidency could still be salvaged from the pathetic rubble of amateurish failure it has become. 'Look,' he said, with ill-concealed bitterness. 'It could be worse.'"

MICKEY KAUS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 28, 1993

THE ROAD FROM NOWHERE

A four-month presidency? For many in Washington—the elected satraps in Congress, the unelected lobbyists nearby who are dismantling the economic plan, the Republicans who are largely responsible for the bankruptcy of government in the first place, the press that enjoys a political cataclysm as much as anybody—it's almost a sweet thought. For the rest of the country, a faltering presidency is far worse news. It occurs while the economy still needs thorough reform, while the public debt continues to grow, while the social pathology of the urban underclass remains largely unaddressed, while health care costs continue to undermine public finance and private well-being, while racial division intensifies, while the international order cracks at the periphery and at the center. It's worth remembering that it was for these reasons that a plurality of Americans placed their bets, with their eyes wide open, on the imperfect candidacy of Bill Clinton last fall. It's for these reasons that we hope the Clinton administration recovers as soon as possible.

The signs, we are glad to say, are good. The appointment of David Gergen means that, finally, Clinton has an editor, someone who can conserve his talents instead of squandering them. We hope it also means the end of a communications strategy—devised in part by Jeff Eller—that holds that the more the president is seen, the more effective he is. The reappointment of George Stephanopoulos so that his duties are not so helplessly expansive focuses another talent. The new prominence of Roy Neel as deputy White House chief of staff and Mark Gearan as director of communications (two Gore staffers, we might add) is also good news. Gearan brings a pleasant awkwardness to the administration's public face.

But the withdrawal of Lani Guinier is the really good news. The original appointment summed up a great deal of what was wrong with Clinton's first few months. By relying solely on personal friendship, by seeming to believe that ideas hardly mattered, by acquiescing to the left of his party while the country was moving steadily to the right, by forgetting the platform on which he challenged both the country and his own party, Clinton stood poised to put another dent in the rationale for his presidency. He pulled back—and for reasons that rang true. He claimed, for the first time, to be returning to his own center, the one place of which we'd heard so little this spring, the only place from which he can rally support in order to govern for the next three-and-a-half years.

What is that center? It is not, we believe, mere pandering to the political right. It's an attempt to rebuild—pragmatically, realistically, painstakingly—a liberalism that can learn from its past excesses, restore faith in the actions of a prudent, effective government and build a constituency among the American middle class. Right now, that means spending cuts and deficit reduction alongside any increases in taxes or government spending; a reallocation of resources toward public investment within existing budgets rather than on top of them; a reliance on market principles in health care reform; and resistance to those on the right and the left

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who seek to balkanize this country racially. It also means a liberalism that can be trusted to provide a lucid rationale for American action in international affairs.

It's essential that the president articulate these central themes of his campaign, and soon; that he make every effort in the next few weeks to draw a line between his rocky start and the rest of his administration. This will not happen by accident, or by a passive-aggressive strategy toward Congress. It will take a charged rebound in substance as well as tone, and one that reaches out to the country as well as to the Capitol Hill elites.

Here are three places to start. On the economic plan, Clinton should try to leap-frog the current confusion. He should gladly accept many of the spending cuts Congress now seems prepared to make (and ask them to share the responsibility) but insist on retaining his increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit for the working poor and for some form of effective and substantial energy tax. (The BTU tax was, we believe, the best proposal, but its loss does not mean the end of an effective energy tax.) On spending reductions, David Boren's plan seems a good place to start. His entitlement caps at least have teeth. And Daniel Patrick Moynihan's proposals for more Medicare cuts could be added to the package. If Clinton sticks with his tax increases and combines them with these cuts, the net deficit reduction would be closer to $700 billion, rather than Boren's $542 billion and Clinton's $496 billion over four years. A compromise of this sort would not seem like just another splitting of the difference but a breakthrough in cutting the deficit. It would require compromise with Congress's caution, but in a way that could be seen as helping Clinton's ultimate goal of deficit reduction. It would also help defang the Perot challenge and restore Clinton's credentials as a new kind of Democrat.

In the current climate, such a proposal would finally give Clinton some initiative against Congress and help solidify the moderate-conservative bloc he needs to survive. It also provides a pellucid point for the entire plan, a rationale that can be sold to the country as a return to fiscal responsibility and prudence: just the thing to remake Clinton's image. From January on, the president misjudged the public mood on the deficit and found himself to the left of even the congressional Democrats. The smartest response is to accelerate the process, concede half of what the opposition wants, and go to the country with a more radical deficit-cutting plan. It would not, we believe, tilt the economy back into recession. In fact, it's the only measure that can restore consumer and market confidence and keep long-term interest rates low.

To achieve this, however, Clinton needs more than domestic stature. He needs international heft. He has consistently underestimated the importance of foreign policy not just in its own right, but as a critical complement to domestic governance. Much of the domestic clout presidents wielded during the cold war stemmed from the gravitas their international responsibility lent them. Since Clinton doesn't have that advantage, he needs all the more to find a new international niche. His incisive action on aiding Russia paid dividends not simply in terms of world stability, but in terms of the image of a president effectively mastering his brief. For a moment, Clinton shone. He can do so again. He has to realize that the relationship between foreign and domestic policy is not zero-sum; success in one can help the other. The executive has few enough levers. Clinton cannot afford to waste any of them.

The simplest way to reaffirm Clinton's foreign policy leadership would be to raise with the European allies a coherent plan for partition in the Balkans on lines similar to those in these pages two weeks ago (see "The Answer," June 14). Warren Christopher should raise this possibility when he sees the E.C. president in Europe this week. The United States simply cannot watch the Bosnian Muslims herded into homelands for further bombardment, if not ultimate extinction. As the full horror of the current situation becomes apparent, this truth will redound to greater effect. Clinton should give voice to it. This surely is where Clinton's moral center lies, and where his convictions coincide with his political interests.

Third, Clinton should appoint someone to head the civil rights division of the Justice Department who clearly signifies a shift away from the kind of racial politics that Lani Guinier represents. Yale law professor Stephen Carter, a passionate believer in racial justice with an acute sense of where some of the attempts to achieve it have gone wrong, would be an ideal choice. This appointment could be combined with that of Stephen Breyer for the Supreme Court, leaving Bruce Babbitt in the position he so admirably fills at Interior and providing the Supreme Court with an independent, liberal mind of the highest character. News reports indicate that Clinton moved away from Breyer because he didn't know him, and was more comfortable with Babbitt. But that's not how a president should choose a justice, someone with whom he is supposed to have no contact at all. If Clinton wants to draw a clear line between the techniques of his first few months and the strategy of the next few years, he should simply select a justice of clear caliber whom he (and his wife) hardly knows.

Does this amount to a shift to the center? We think only those with an impoverished political imagination could think so. It is, rather, a shift to the kind of liberalism Clinton articulated last year. It moves away from ideology and toward ideas, past the chimera of mere pragmatism to a blend of policies—fiscal prudence and reinvestment, leadership abroad, the true meaning of civil rights—that can effectively remake the political map. A reconstructed liberalism was never designed to be simply the squaring of the liberal and conservative circles, but a principled attempt to learn from the mistakes and build on the insights of each. Clinton showed in the campaign that he grasped this. He's beginning to demonstrate in his administration that he can put it into practice. Others have already written off the Clinton presidency. We think it could be finally beginning. •

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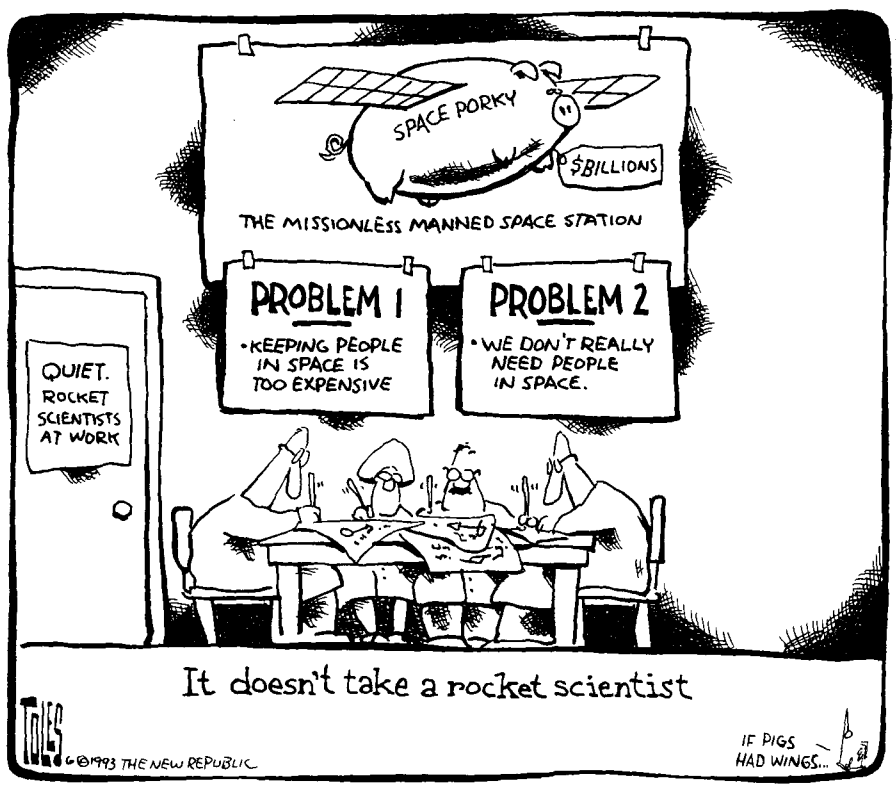
NOTEBOOK

CLINTON SUCK-UP WATCH: "If we could be one-one-hundredth as great as you and Hillary Rodham Clinton have been together in the White House, we'd take it right now and walk away winners." —Dan Rather, to Bill and Hillary Clinton, on Rather's new job as co-anchor with Connie Chung of the "CBS Evening News"

TARNOFF TURN-OFF: Peter Tarnoff's recent gaffe was not the first time he has goofed up while defending isolationism. In this case, he told a group of reporters on May 25 that domestic economic problems would force the United States to withdraw from many foreign leadership roles, and cited Bosnia as an example. His statements were promptly disputed by other senior State Department officials, including Warren Christopher, who had to be contacted at home to deny the assertion. But Tarnoff's views should have come as no surprise. In the Gulf war he was strongly anti-interventionist. In a November 1990 op-ed in *The New York Times*, he recommended George Bush reduce U.S. forces to 100,000 if he couldn't build a U.N. force by the end of that year. Otherwise, he warned, domestic criticism of Bush "will continue to mount." In February 1991 he chided against a ground attack on Iraqi forces. "Iraq has already been defeated," he insisted. "We already have cut Saddam Hussein down to size." Tell that to the Kurds, who, thanks in part to the signals coming out of Washington, are preparing for a new onslaught from Baghdad.


SPACE PORKY
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THE MISSIONLESS MANNED SPACE STATION
PROBLEM 1
•KEEPING PEOPLE IN SPACE IS TOO EXPENSIVE
PROBLEM 2
•WE DON'T REALLY NEED PEOPLE IN SPACE.
QUIET. ROCKET SCIENTISTS AT WORK
It doesn't take a rocket scientist
TOLES ©1993 THE NEW REPUBLIC
IF PIGS HAD WINGS...

THE BERMUDA ANGLE: Who can blame David Gergen for wanting a weekend in Bermuda before tackling the Augean realities of the White House? We were a little astounded to learn, however, that Gergen's deep breath in the sun was drawn in the company of Ross Perot. This may be yet another clue about the character of Gergen's centrism. Mere centrism, after all, lends itself particularly well to contentlessness, to a splitting of all the differences and a respecting of none, to a competence for (as the old Jewish proverb has it) dancing at all the weddings. This was Clinton's problem, not the solution to it. First Gergen works for Reagan; then he works for Clinton; now he hangs out with Perot. Maybe he was doing the president's work. Still, is there nobody David Gergen will not break bread with?

SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL: The latest racial lawsuit to hit Denny's restaurant is a claim by six black Secret Service agents that, in a contingent of twenty-one agents (seven black, fourteen white) on a recent trip to Annapolis, Maryland, they were singled out for late and poor service. If true, it's a lamentable incident of discrimination. As George Stephanopoulos put it, "Discrimination against black Secret Service agents would be a very serious problem." But one question remains: Why, in a racially mixed contingent, were six black agents sitting separately anyway?

THE SLIMFAST CURRICULUM: In a profession distinguished by cravenness, UCLA administrators take high honors. Following a takeover of the faculty center and a week-long hunger strike by nine demonstrators, they have given in to the demand that they create a department of Chicano studies. Of course, there was already a Chicano studies program, as there is a black and an Asian studies program, but never mind. Those will surely become departments too, now that the effectiveness of this tactic has been demonstrated. In fact, if you want anything at UCLA—less homework, better grades, your own major—threatening to starve to death on the lawn seems like a pretty good way to get it.

POINTE OF INFORMATION: This week Mindy Aloff joins our masthead as TNR's dance critic. Her essays on dance and its many forms have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Nation*, *The Atlantic* and of course our own pages; and she is completing *The Oxford Book of Dance and Ballet Anecdotes*. •

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THE TURNING

By Fred Barnes

It's not all bad news for President Clinton. True, he's matched the disastrous image of Jimmy Carter in 1980: a weak president who veered too far to the left and yearned to return to the ideological center. But Clinton has two things Carter didn't: time and allies. Carter had to run for re-election in 1980, so there wasn't time for a successful remake. Clinton has three years to establish himself as an authentic centrist. It's a tough job, but not impossible. He has centrist friends, mostly associated with the Democratic Leadership Council, to prod, encourage and defend him. Carter was practically alone. When the DLC's founders, Al From and Will Marshall, talked to Carter in 1986 about their new organization, his reaction was telling. "Boy, could I have used a DLC to back me up," he said.

Clinton chose among three strategies for governing and seeking re-election in 1996. The first, the full-throated liberal populist approach, wasn't seriously considered. Clinton and Mack McLarty, the White House chief of staff, recognized that the administration's frequent tilts to the left were a major cause of the president's plummeting popularity. The second option, a strategy of oscillation, was a natural for Clinton, since it would allow him to flit back and forth between liberal and centrist positions, which he likes to do. This, of course, is what he did for the first four months of his presidency. The problem was, he came off as weak, malleable and unpresidential. That left option three, the genuine centrist strategy. Clinton chose this explicitly when he recruited David Gergen as a senior White House adviser.

Gergen's mandate is to package Clinton as a centrist in policymaking and politics. This is Gergen's specialty. Yes, yes, he's worked for three Republican presidents: Nixon, Ford and Reagan. But he tried to dress them up as centrists too—often against their wishes. With Clinton, he's got a willing participant. Gergen is a centrist himself and always has been. He's closer ideologically to Clinton, at least to a centrist Clinton, than he was to any of the Republicans who employed him. When his appointment was announced by Clinton on May 29, Gergen declared himself a DLC partisan. At a Rose Garden ceremony and a briefing, he identified with DLC ideas—welfare reform, national service, etc.—and declared they should be given higher priority.

Now comes the hard part. There are three roadblocks to Clinton's emergence as a full-fledged centrist, and they are significant ones. The first is the White House staff: there aren't many centrists on it. Besides Gergen, there's deputy domestic adviser Bill Galston and McLarty and, on some issues, political director Rahm Emanuel. That's about it. The best example of the peril of having too few centrists was the Lani Guinier affair. There was widespread agreement at the White House in favor of her nomination as head of the Justice Department's civil rights division. Her left-liberal views raised concerns only with the handful of centrists. Emanuel warned the nomination would stir trouble on Capitol Hill. Galston wrote a memo outlining Guinier's views and urging her nomination be withdrawn. From the outside, the DLC lobbied against her. But the centrists didn't constitute a critical mass. There weren't enough of them to derail the nomination at the point of least humiliation for both Clinton and Guinier.

Guinier had ardent allies on the inside. Legal counsel Bernard Nussbaum and deputy communications director Ricki Seidman insisted her views would not jeopardize confirmation. They worked closely with Howard Paster, the chief congressional lobbyist for the White House. In late May he sent a letter to all 100 senators saying Guinier was a victim of "substantial misinformation." A senior White House official said Clinton didn't see the letter before it was sent. And it proved to be an embarrassment once he had read Guinier's writings (at Vice President Al Gore's urging). In announcing his decision on June 3 to abandon her nomination, Clinton said some of her views had been distorted, but not all. She espoused ideas, he said, "that I, myself, cannot embrace."

The point here is that with a more centrist staff, the Guinier nomination might never have occurred. At worst, she'd have been dumped earlier. Clinton could have hired more centrists in the first place. Why didn't he? He didn't think he'd need them. And the truth is there aren't enough centrist Democrats to go around (thus the hiring of a centrist Republican, Gergen). But the top officials of the DLC—From, Marshall, Rob Shapiro—are available. And Clinton has been crying out privately for more centrist input. On speech drafts and memos, he jots plaintive questions like, "Where's Bubba?" or "Where's the middle class?" A more centrist staff would make sure middle-class interests were taken into account.

Another roadblock is Clinton's governing coalition. He needs a new one if he's to govern as a centrist. The liberal coalition he's relied on—Congress, interest groups, liberals in his own administration—won't work for a centrist. The trick in Congress is to mobilize moderate and conservative Democrats, pick off some liberals, then attract Republicans. This hodge-podge is the constituency for a centrist president. O.K., it's not a reliable one. Pursuing a centrist path, admits Marshall, "is in some ways a leap into the unknown. The coalition is not as vocal or as organized or as visible as the old [liberal] guard in the party." But if Clinton wants billions in the 1994 budget for welfare reform and for hiring 100,000 cops, that's the coalition he'll need. And unless

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he pushes those proposals, he'll never persuade anyone he's really a centrist.

The third roadblock is Clinton's rhetoric. His speeches, even since his conversion to centrism, defend government activism and higher taxes. But every poll shows the public wants more spending cuts, fewer tax hikes, less government intervention. Clinton was slow to see how serious voters are about this. The victory of Kay Bailey Hutchison in the Texas Senate race ought to wake him up. Her campaign was based on one notion: Clinton is taxing too much, cutting spending too little. And she got 67 percent of the vote, an astonishingly high figure.

In his first speech after hiring Gergen, Clinton injected a fresh dose of centrist rhetoric. (Gergen didn't write the speech.) Speaking in Milwaukee on June 1, Clinton positioned himself between the "politics of entitlement" on the left and the "politics of abandonment" on the right. "There is a limit to how much government can do in the absence of an appropriate response by the American people at the grass-roots level," he said. "And most of our growth has and always will come from the private sector." This was good positioning. If Clinton can flesh out a program to match and stick to it, he's on his way to recovery. •

A case study in racial politics.

ANTI-ANTI-RACIST

By Jim Sleeper

If anyone involved in the City University of New York's recent search for a new City College president read the essays of Yolanda Moses before I dug them out of the library on the eve of her appointment, they aren't telling. In them, Moses, academic vice president of the obscure California State University, Dominguez Hills, campus, outlined the principles and strategies that she thinks universities should follow to promote diversity. She served up a hash of half-baked, sometimes insidious nostrums from the nether regions of academic administrative discourse, but that wasn't nearly as unsavory as the response of much of New York City's liberal establishment to criticisms of Moses. The affair was a case study in how high-profile controversies are spun in the new affirmative-action mainstream.

American institutions must diversify as a practical and moral imperative, but some of Moses's proposals threatened to turn diversity into a push for proportional minority representation that compromises standards and morale. Too few minority faculty are hired and promoted, she wrote, because "service on committees, student advising and university community activities (especially those that promote cultural diversity)" are not "ranked as highly as research.... That will have to change if cultural pluralism is to flourish." Changing the reward structure in this way is appropriate, in her view, because American universities "are products of Western society in which masculine values like an orientation toward achievement and objectivity are valued over cooperation, connectedness and subjectivity."

Moses has a Ph.D. in anthropology, but the half-dozen essays—which constitute almost the whole of her published work since the late '80s—reflected her full-time work as a preacher of diversity at Dominguez Hills and as a consultant to other colleges, foundations and academic associations. Although she'd long ago given up formal anthropological research for administration, "where my laboratory has become the academy," Moses was about to become president-elect of the American Anthropological Association, which presents itself as "documenting the richness of the diversity of the human condition."

But could such dreamy notions of diversity heal the polarization caused at City College by Leonard Jeffries, who is nothing if not an apostle of "connectedness and subjectivity"? When I asked her on the phone whether she believed in any objective standards under which Jeffries's scholarship might be found wanting, she said, "That's what tenure review is for. Standards, of course, are in flux." Moses's ideas seemed equally wrong for the City College whose engineering and science programs draw top minority students—people who, like CCNY graduates Felix Frankfurter and Colin Powell before them, want their religion and race to count for less, not more, in their academic and public lives.

Yet Chancellor Ann Reynolds was about to ask CUNY's trustees to name Moses instead of the other finalist, a Harlem-based physicist out of Bell Laboratories who runs a foundation to help minorities enter careers in the sciences and engineering. The physicist had no experience in academic administration, however, and the other candidates had been even weaker. "The pool was poor," a search panel member told me. "A lot of terrific blacks turned us down."

But when I broke the story of Moses's appointment and examined her ideas in my column in the *New York Daily News*, liberal outrage was directed not at CUNY or at her, but at critics of the university such as Herman Badillo, a politician who, as a Puerto Rican orphan, had worked his way through City College and graduated cum laude in 1951. Badillo, a CUNY trustee, urged his colleagues to put Moses's appointment on hold until they had examined her more closely.

Reynolds went into overdrive; she persuaded the trustees to outvote Badillo by promising that Moses would pursue diversity without compromising standards. Jay Hershenson, CUNY's vice chancellor for university relations, told Moses to stop returning calls, brought her to New York for a quick tutorial and then sent her out on selected interviews.

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One columnist who got through to Moses early was Sheryl McCarthy, a black woman whose identification with the new president was instant and intense. "Both Badillo and the *Daily News* have tried to equate the hiring of Moses to the college's retention of Jeffries," McCarthy wrote. (In fact, we had argued that a Jeffries can't exist without enablers, however well-intentioned.) Reynolds then sent Moses to *The New York Times* editorial board. Instead of raising questions about Moses's writings, like those it had posed about the work of Lani Guinier, the paper moved to Moses's defense, citing none of her controversial views but pronouncing her credentials "respectable." Of course, Moses's résumé, like Guinier's, is less important than her ideas, which bear even more directly than Guinier's on what she can do in office. Yet criticisms of Moses, a *Times* editorial declared, were "wildly overstated, an irresponsible invitation to bigotry."

That sort of argument has become a standard trope in diversity debates, effective in squelching the kinds of doubts about beliefs like Moses's that the *Times* editorial declined to pursue. (The paper's two profiles of Moses were more balanced.) Such doubts have to be aired because while diversity is an imperative, everything is in the details: it's not easy to disentangle what's stodgy and parochial in a tradition from the shared understandings and loyalties that nurture character, morale and, yes, excellence. As the Moses controversy is only the latest to suggest, such subtleties are lost on the cutting edge of the diversity movement.

The syndrome that ensues is all too familiar: College X, hell-bent on diversity, accepts disproportionate numbers of blacks and Hispanics who don't meet its usual standards. As those students do poorly, even well-qualified students of color experience white stereotyping and resentment. Into that chasm of mistrust fly the occasional anti-black (and, in response, anti-Semitic or anti-white) epithets, proving the existence of a virulent racism, which only more diversity, discipline and consciousness-raising can cure.

The root cause of the failure, of course, isn't diversity itself, but the bad public schools, poverty and family breakdown that hold back minority youths. A university that thinks it can solve such social problems through its admissions and hiring offices, rather than its research, doesn't understand its mission. The same is true of a great orchestra, newspaper or any other corporate entity whose first priority must be the excellence of whatever it produces. Yet the iron logic of diversity suppresses any such analysis. Dissenting views—and, indeed, standards themselves—are denounced as racist.

But why? The answer has something to do with the morphology of the liberal mind. Like the parlor left's fellow traveling in the '30s, the white, liberal end of the diversity movement is nourished in a fictive yet passionate embrace of the oppressed—the "proletariat" then, "people of color" now—that has more to do with the satisfaction of its champions than of its intended beneficiaries, who are summarily boxed and labeled by skin color or surname, often to their own chagrin.

It is precisely because this sort of missionary zeal is so deeply rooted in unexamined needs that it resists examination. Just as fellow travelers used to cast critics of communism as tools of fascism, promoters of diversity cast critics of even their worst excesses as the handmaidens of bigots. Yet the implication that Yolanda Moses was attacked because of her race and sex, not her ideas, reflected denial of a far deeper truth: her champions have selected and defended her for precisely that reason.

As in the '30s, a leveling impulse increasingly drives the affirmative-action movement. In a famous *Times* essay a few years ago, Roger Wilkins argued with tart irony that whites should love affirmative action because of all the lazy and incompetent whites it had sheltered for centuries. This, too, has been picked up and repeated.

If the charge of bigotry is unfair to diversity's responsible critics, the argument for leveling is just plain sad. Throughout American history, insurgent groups have broken down doors by proving that they're better, not that everyone else is as bad. They've deluged the gatekeepers with talent; if rebuffed, they've started their own colleges, law firms and banks, making brilliant end runs around a stodgy establishment.

This, of course, is what countless blacks have done. And it is against that heroic legacy that one reads, with overwhelming sadness, McCarthy's defense of Moses: "Mediocrity is a common characteristic of white male academics.... Let's hire women and people of color who are as ordinary as the white males who already dominate academia, and there will be no trouble in keeping up current standards. No trouble at all."

JIM SLEEPER is a columnist for the *New York Daily News*.

David Boren's tortuous politics.

HOKEY OKIE

By Jacob Weisberg

Back in February, it was hard to find a bigger booster of the president's economic plan than David Boren. "This is the best, most promising budget I've seen since I've been in Congress," the round and jolly Oklahoma senator told *The New York Times* on February 28. He didn't just like the package. He raved about it, saying he supported it "unconditionally" and "unreservedly." On April 1 Boren voted for the budget resolution in support of the plan. By the following month, however, he was leading a Democratic

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revolt against it. On May 20 he told reporters he would not vote for any plan containing a BTU tax "in committee, on the floor, ever, anywhere, period, exclamation point." That same day he held a press conference with three colleagues to announce an alternative to the Clinton plan. He now says he views his opposition as "a matter of conscience."

What exactly is this man doing? For some reason, Boren hasn't been called upon to explain his pirouettes; perhaps reporters have been too busy trying to keep up with them. On May 30 he said Bill Clinton's willingness to compromise "improve[d] the chances by about 100 percent that we're going to be able to work out an agreement." Two days later he was back to square one: no BTU tax. In a June 7 interview in his Senate office, Boren again sounded conciliatory. Hiking his thumbs under his American-flag suspenders, he said he might vote for a heavily amended tax that exempts commercial users of energy. But he will still vote no if the plan does not cut spending more and limit the growth of entitlements.

In February, Boren told me, nobody had examined the plan very closely, himself included. It was popular after Clinton's speech—people approached Boren in airports to urge his support. He also trusted the president. "I guess I've sort of gone through sort of the same metamorphosis as the public," he says. "When I heard the speech, what I thought I was hearing was a package that was more spending cuts than tax increases. The fact sheet that came out afterward—I didn't bother to study it that closely.... I was busy with a lot of other things. Later, I began to look at it." This is a bit like Clinton's story about why he changed his mind on Lani Guinier: possibly true, but not very flattering.

Some annoyed Senate staffers argue that Boren's gambit is driven by his well-known affection for the limelight. "He just loves the attention in a way that is a little bit beyond the norm for a group of men who devote themselves to the pursuit of attention," says one key Senate aide. Boren does boast the Senate's most awesome "Me" wall, filled with honorary degrees, framed pens from bill-signings and autographed pictures of everyone from Rajiv Gandhi to Kirk Douglas. (Sample: "To the Honorable David Boren, one of the great men of our time," from his friend Carl Albert.) But leading an intraparty rebellion to get publicity is a little like stepping in front of a freight train to get your name in the paper. It does the trick, but at a rather high cost.

A more practical interpretation of Boren's behavior is that he ran into a storm of protest in Oklahoma. A group called Citizens for a Sound Economy has spent $100,000 on anti-tax ads, and constituent pressure has been heavy. But even that can't quite explain it. Boren may have the safest seat in the Senate; he won in 1990 with 83 percent of the vote. The more compelling explanation is that he has been bitten by the statesmanship bug. Boren has convinced himself that by pressuring the president he is expressing the will of the country, not just the wishes of his constituents. "To me there are certain watershed times. This is a watershed time.... As an American, I believe I have this responsibility," he says. He even thinks he's helping his fellow Rhodes scholar Bill Clinton by pushing him toward the center.

The goody-two-shoes image Boren tries to project is part of what irks the White House and many of his Senate colleagues. John Breaux of Louisiana, a fellow BTU antagonist, doesn't pretend his opposition is about anything more than his state's interests. Boren, by contrast, claims his decision isn't based on politics but rather on doing right by future generations, etc.

Boren's erratic and self-serving positions belie his motives. Only from a distance does he look like a deficit hawk. Boren supported Paul Tsongas during the primaries, and Ross Perot speaks of him in glowing terms. But his Senate record shows him to be a classic deficit NIMBY. He wants to cut spending, but not if it means trimming subsidies for farmers and oil men in Oklahoma. When he was chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Boren cut the budget by $180 million in 1991—but only to spend the money on the David L. Boren National Security Education Program, which provides graduate scholarships for study abroad. Threats from the White House to kill the program in retaliation for his mischief alarm him. "If they want to do something to me, I would think they'd do it in a different way," he says.

Boren is a NIMBY on other issues as well. He has proposed to eliminate PACs and takes no PAC money himself. But his campaign finance bill would not affect individual contributors, the source of most of the senator's money—including $177,000 from oil and gas interests in the last election cycle. Boren says he has no problem with Senator Paul Wellstone's proposal to limit individ-

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ual contributions to $500, but that as the floor manager of the bill he must oppose it, since it would hurt Democrats and help Republicans.

On the budget, too, Boren's bipartisan alternative looks appetizing at a distance. It would create the 2-to-1 ratio of spending cuts to tax increases for which Leon Panetta once argued. And it doesn't just profess a wish to cut entitlements; it says how it would be done. But close up, holes become apparent. The senator complains that Clinton's tax hikes would fall too hard on people with low and moderate incomes; his own cuts would hit them even harder. He would reduce the Earned Income Tax Credit and cut cost-of-living adjustments for government retirees and Social Security recipients, diminishing the real incomes of people living on just over $7,200 a year. His proposal also relies on phony savings, such as shifting another $41 billion in Medicaid costs to the states. And Boren's alternative only reduces the deficit by about $9 billion a year more than Clinton's, which makes you wonder what all the fuss is about. If he accepted the BTU tax *and* demanded more spending cuts, his position would have more integrity.

Given the trouble he has caused, Boren can't quit now, even though one senses part of him wants to. "I hope I will vote for it," he says. "But I'm not going to compromise for the sake of compromise." Finance Chairman Daniel Patrick Moynihan believes Boren will come around, as his Oklahoma colleague Dave McCurdy finally did after leading a rebellion in the House. But the White House will be only too happy to deal Boren out and forget about the Finance Committee if it can cut a deal with Breaux, Bob Kerrey and other stray Senate Democrats. Boren sandbagged Clinton by not making his objections known in private ahead of time. Had he done so, he might have saved the president, and himself, a lot of grief. •

COURT WATCH

BANKING ON BRUCE?

By Jeffrey Rosen

If Bill Clinton nominates Bruce Babbitt to the Supreme Court, he will be hard-pressed to claim that the interior secretary shares his judicial philosophy. For after reviewing Babbitt's extensive writings and speeches, the White House is confident that Babbitt has virtually no opinions on constitutional issues that he has bothered to express. For most politicians, this would be unexceptional; but in Babbitt's case it is somewhat surprising. For the intellectual range of his interests is so broad—Babbitt has written about subjects from antitrust enforcement to Amazonian development—that he appears to be curious about everything *except* constitutional interpretation.

Compared with Babbitt's views on other topics, which are generally nuanced and intelligently provocative, his few statements about the Constitution are disappointingly superficial. In a 1987 speech to the NAACP, Babbitt called for a searching inquiry into Robert Bork's judicial philosophy. He then offered a crude caricature of the philosophy he called "interpretivism":

> That's the voguish term for "judicial restraint," which isn't very voguish at all. The essence of that philosophy is that the president and Congress can do whatever they like, so long as it is not specifically forbidden in text of the Constitution or its amendments.... You can't read [the Framers'] Constitution like a rulebook.... The job of a Justice is justice.

The Bork speech was a partisan screed, delivered in the heat of the presidential campaign; and perhaps it should not be taken too seriously. But in Babbitt's more measured writings and speeches, the references to constitutional issues are no more detailed. In a 1981 article for this magazine, Babbitt noted that "the sorting out of governmental functions in a federal system is ultimately a political decision best left to political battlefields rather than to the cloistered reasoning of judges." (See "States Rights for Liberals," TNR, January 24, 1981.) But he seemed uninterested in the constitutional as well as the political nuances of the federalism debate, including the 1976 decision that the Tenth Amendment prohibits the federal government from interfering with "traditional state functions."

Babbitt's record of appointing judges in Arizona is also unenlightening. Mike McCurry, the State Department spokesman and Babbitt's former chief of staff, recalls that "on the campaign trail, when Babbitt was asked what kind of justice he would appoint, he would say: 'the kind of judge I've already appointed—Sandra Day O'Connor.' Then he'd say how important it is to appoint people who respect precedents like *Roe* v. *Wade*. It was a stock answer, which is unusual for him." O'Connor, for her part, is an odd role model for Babbitt to embrace. He chose her as part of his laudable effort to diversify the Arizona judiciary with merit appointments (25 percent of his judicial appointments were Hispanic, black or women); but she has proved, after Clarence Thomas, to be the most disengaged justice on the Rehnquist Court.

It was not judicial philosophy, however, that drew Clinton to Babbitt. According to several reports, the president wants a justice with whom he feels "comfortable," a politician in the model of Earl Warren, who will mediate and conciliate between competing judicial factions. This is the most absurd manifestation of Clinton's personalizing of the political; and it represents an unfortunate misunderstanding of the dynamics of the current Court. As the Thurgood Marshall papers show, the Rehnquist Court is not the Warren Court. The jus-

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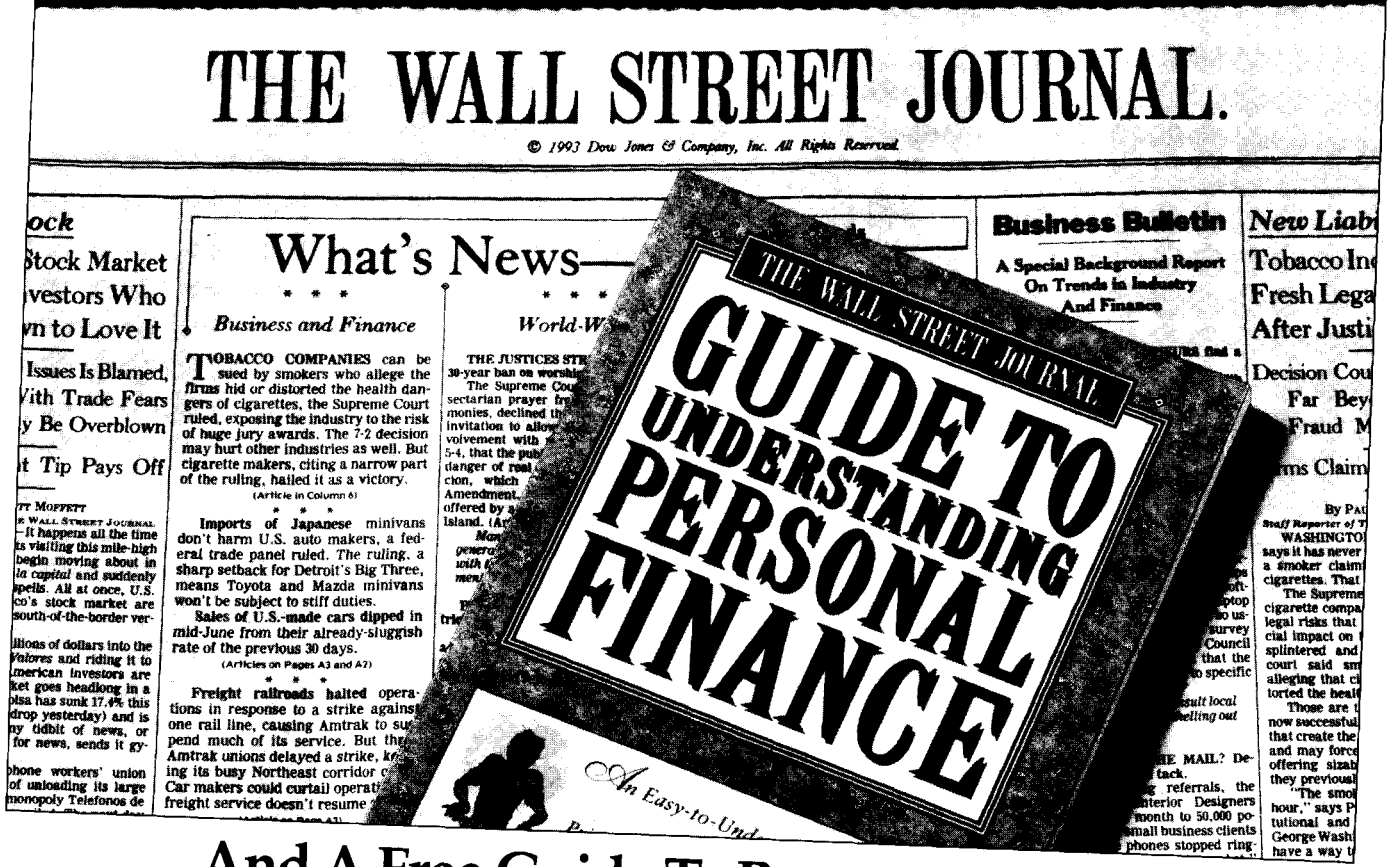
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tices today devote little time to intellectual debate or political horse-trading. Instead, the most effective justices—Stevens, Scalia and Souter—are distinguished by their ability to combine a meticulous attention to detail with a broader constitutional vision.

Clinton has reportedly been moved by the argument that eight of the justices on the Court that decided *Brown* v. *Board of Education* came from politics. But the *Brown* Court was a mixed bag; and the most political of its justices, such as Truman crony Shay Minton, were the most mediocre. And among the former politicians, the most successful, such as Hugo Black, were the most cerebral.

Babbitt appears, in short, to have caught Clinton's attention for the wrong reasons. It also would be a shame to lose him at Interior. But if he took the job, and took it seriously, there is some hope that he might become an engaged justice, in the tradition of Black rather than Warren. First, Babbitt does most of his own writing. Editors who have worked with him attest that, like most good writers, he is grateful for criticism. "All I ever learned in a big law firm was, the power is in the hands of the draftsmen," Babbitt told *The Washington Post* in 1986.

Second, Babbitt is one of the few sitting governors to have written a few law review articles; and he plunges into the most numbingly obscure questions with a scrupulous attention to detail. In a 1980 article on "The 'State' of Regulatory Reform," Babbitt discussed the perverse economic effects of transportation rate regulation; and in a 1982 article, "Federalism and the Environment: An Intergovernmental Perspective of the Sagebrush Rebellion," Babbitt carefully reviewed the language of the federal statutes regulating state land use. Both articles suggest that Babbitt may have the technical competence to be a judge.

By most accounts, finally, Babbitt is more of a thinker than a natural politician. Yet he appears to be free of the brooding narcissism that afflicts other self-styled political intellectuals, such as Mario Cuomo and Gary Hart. He is famous among Marshall scholars for having bypassed the conventional route of studying politics at Oxford, electing instead to take a masters in geology at the exotic University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Babbitt seems to have the same combination of inner-directed confidence, personal modesty and candid integrity that has made David Souter an increasingly effective justice. Perhaps Babbitt, like Souter, has the potential to win the confidence of his colleagues, not because he is a politician, but in spite of it.

Could Babbitt challenge Scalia and change the debate for the entire Court? Not for a few years, at least. There is no shame in taking some time to get up to speed, as the shaky first terms of Black and Souter demonstrate. But with Babbitt's constitutional lacuna in mind, his appointment would be a gamble, and one that does not reflect terribly well on Clinton. Something is amiss when, one by one, the best candidates are disqualified because they fail to remind the president of himself. •

The imperial U.N. secretary-general.

ALBOUTROS

By Michael Lind

In Bosnia, after the promotion of one U.N. plan after another, the Serbs have effectively won their war of conquest. Cambodia, after a U.N. effort involving 20,000 U.N. personnel and half the U.N. peacekeeping budget, is poised on the edge of another round of civil war. In Somalia, fighting in Mogadishu on June 5 claimed the lives of twenty-two Pakistani soldiers—the largest losses suffered by U.N. peacekeeping troops in a single incident since the deaths of forty-four Blue Helmets in the Congo in 1961 (237 Blue Helmets in all lost their lives). On June 6, in Liberia, 300 refugees were massacred and disfigured by marauding rebels who descended on a town in search of rice the United Nations had distributed the day before.

These debacles are testimony not just to lack of luck, willpower or resources, but to the inherent unworkability of the way the U.N. has come to operate in the last two years. After the Gulf war, many devout internationalists feared the United States would use the U.N. as a camouflage for ersatz multilateralism. Now that seems a pious hope. As the United States has allowed others to take the initiative, the world has been given demonstrations of *real* multilateralism. And they have not worked.

In Cambodia as in the Balkans, the U.N. has nobly disdained to distinguish between those fighting to conquer and those fighting to defend; the goal, it said, was

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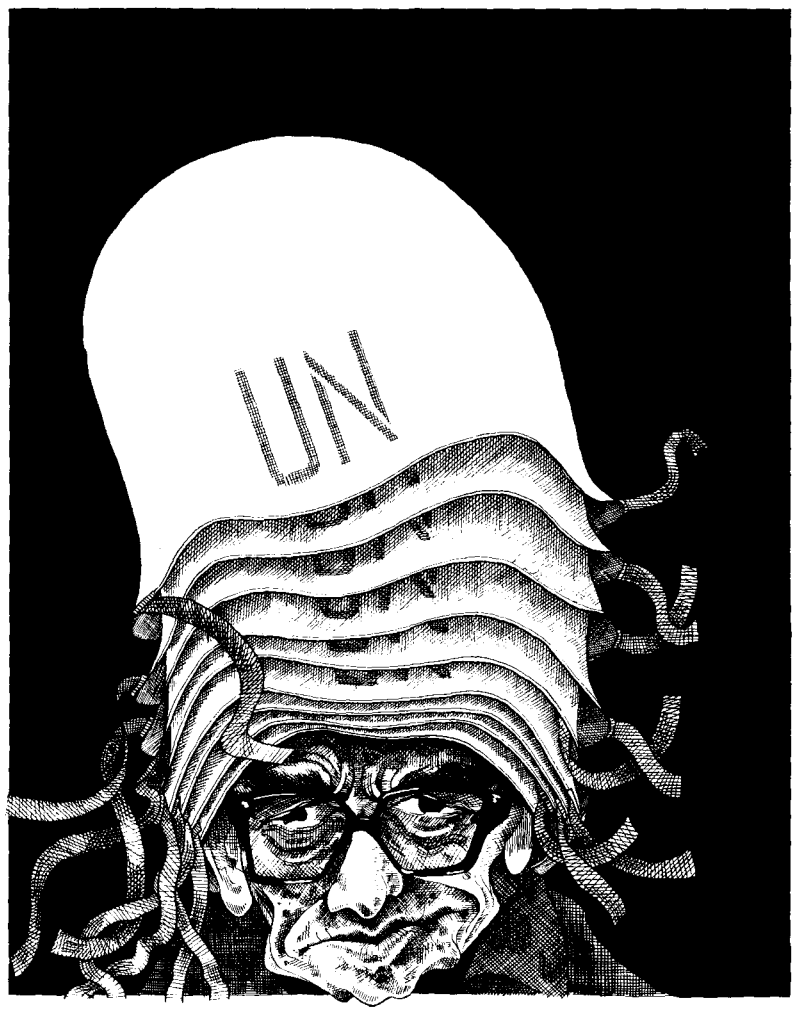
to stop the fighting, period. But in attempting to rise above power politics, the U.N. instead has become a victim of it, a pawn of the Bosnian Serbs and the Khmer Rouge. Similarly, in the grand attempt to substitute talk for war, the U.N. has played into the hands of those for whom talk is another weapon of war. The Khmer Rouge and the Serbs have used participation in U.N. talks to legitimate themselves, while consolidating their gains and engaging in continued atrocity. Even worse, they have sought to deter armed challenges to their forces by using U.N. personnel as hostages. In the Balkans, America's allies have opposed suggestions that the arms embargo be lifted for the Bosnian Muslims, or that force be used against the Bosnian Serbs, for fear that U.N. personnel might be harmed. The victim should not be armed, for fear the police might be injured.

This predicament, however, is no accident. The current vision of the U.N.—independent of Great Power direction, patron of supranational military and bureaucratic agencies and capable of acting as the agent for the international community—is identified with one man in particular. For Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the federalist dream of a supranational technocracy run by statesmen who stand outside of national loyalties is deeply held. Small wonder, for Boutros-Ghali is not only the ultimate outsider, but also a world-class technocrat.



BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Throughout his career, Boutros-Ghali has both benefited and suffered from his status in Egypt as an insider by class and an outsider by ethnicity. His grandfather, Boutros Ghali, the first (and only) Coptic Christian prime minister of modern Egypt, was gunned down by a Muslim assassin in 1910. The family name was changed to incorporate his first name Boutros (Peter in Coptic). Boutros Boutros-Ghali was born in a 100-room mansion in Cairo and grew up in the exotic world of wealth and privilege that Alexander Durrell chronicled in *The Alexandria Quartet*. For an Egyptian of Boutros-Ghali's generation, Europe rather than America was the center of the world—and Europe was, above all, France. It was only natural that he study in Paris, where he received, along with separate diplomas in political science, economics and public law, a Ph.D. in international law from the Sorbonne in 1949 (his thesis dealt with regional organizations).

The 1952 revolution that abolished the Egyptian monarchy and brought Nasser to power did not harm the Boutros-Ghalis as much as it did other elite families associated with the ancien régime. In the new dispensation, Boutros-Ghali owed his political rise to two powerful patrons. The first was Mohamed Heikal, Nasser's alter ego, an éminence grise whom many consider to have been more important than any of Nasser's ministers. Heikal made Boutros-Ghali, then a University of Cairo professor, a member of an influential circle of Egyptian foreign policy thinkers who wrote in the '50s and '60s for the daily *Al-Ahram* (The Pyramids). The Heikal protégé became editor of *Al-Siyasa Al-Dawlyya*, the Egyptian *Foreign Affairs*. Boutros-Ghali has the reputation as a writer more prolific than profound; even so, he is considered one of the best-educated and best-informed members of the Egyptian elite.

It was Anwar Sadat, his other benefactor, who raised Boutros-Ghali to real prominence. When two foreign ministers resigned in succession to protest Sadat's planned visit to Jerusalem in 1977, the Egyptian president made the Coptic diplomat his acting foreign minister and brought him along to Israel. In 1979 Boutros-Ghali played a major part in negotiating the Camp David Accords. Israelis considered him a hard-liner, but a reasonable one (ironically, radical Arabs for years have denounced him as a traitor, a Christian pawn of American imperialism and Zionism). Israeli negotiators called him "Pierre" and "Peter Peter." Sadat himself would occasionally belittle his aide for his Western education and manners by calling him "Peter." Fortunately Boutros-Ghali has a sense of his own importance. "Both Carter and Sadat were amateurs," he

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explained in an interview about the peace process, "but whereas Carter was inclined to listen to his aides, Sadat was not."

After Egypt was ostracized from the Arab world as a result of its peace with Israel, Boutros-Ghali helped bring the country back in with the help of his connections to African states in the forty-five-member Islamic Conference Organization. This became, in 1984, the first predominantly Arab international organization to readmit Egypt.

Some have suggested that Boutros-Ghali's status as an ethnic outsider made him a useful instrument for Sadat in pursuing peace with Israel—and an equally useful scapegoat for Sadat's successors. With Sadat gone, Boutros-Ghali is the living symbol of Camp David, which continues to inspire conflicting emotions in Egypt. The shadow of Camp David, along with his Coptic origins and his Jewish wife, might explain why Boutros-Ghali never rose from minister of state for foreign affairs to foreign minister of Egypt. Reportedly Boutros-Ghali was not well liked in the Foreign Ministry, and no love is lost between him and Osama Al-Baz, the powerful, Harvard-educated *chef de Cabinet* of President Hosni Mubarak. The Mubarak regime, it is thought, viewed Boutros-Ghali's ascension with a mixture of patriotic pride (he became secretary-general not long after Naguib Mahfouz received the Nobel Prize for literature) and relief at getting him out of the country. In 1991 he was promoted to deputy prime minister for foreign affairs, perhaps to help him get the U.N. post.

Boutros-Ghali took over the U.N. at an auspicious moment. With the successful conclusion of the Gulf war, the prestige of the U.N. and of the United States was higher than ever before. With the conclusion of the cold war, the veto-induced paralysis of the Security Council had come to an end. During the first twenty years of the U.N.'s existence, there were only ten U.N. peacekeeping missions (the first—an omen, perhaps?—was dispatched in June 1948 during the Arab-Israeli conflict); by contrast, since 1988 the Security Council has authorized thirteen peacekeeping operations, in Afghanistan, El Salvador, Namibia and Angola, among other places. The United States, which had begun withholding its dues in the mid-'80s to punish the anti-American tilt of the Third World-dominated General Assembly, was again paying what it owed as the U.N.'s major donor.

For the top post in a reformed U.N. led by the United

Reverting to type

Before the U.N. engages in more elaborate foreign adventures, it might take a moment to think about reforming itself. Like the thirty-eight-story tower it occupies in Manhattan, the U.N. is a vertical structure of staggering complexity and waste. The secretary-general is at the top, on the thirty-eighth floor. Below him, arranged in a labyrinth of descending scales of rank and grade, are some 5,000 international civil servants. This is the so-called Secretariat, an army of bureaucrats who do everything from running the Department of Public Information to sweeping the conference rooms. All are answerable to the secretary-general alone (on entering service they must swear an oath of allegiance to him).

Like Orwell's ministries in *1984*, the Secretariat is arranged in interlocking departments and committees. (There is even an ominously named Commission on the Truth.) U.N. departments are usually referred to only by their acronyms, adding to the organization's opaqueness. A few of these, like UNESCO and WHO, are familiar. Others, like WIPO, UNCTAD and IESA/DRPA/POP are entirely inscrutable, even to faithful readers of *Foreign Affairs*.

On a recent visit to the U.N., I had a chance encounter with this tangled bureaucracy. While leafing through the U.N.'s internal telephone directory, the listing for the Typewriter Repair Unit caught my eye. Earlier that day I had stumbled upon rows and rows of typewriters stacked outside the second-floor Press Office. There were thirty-seven in all, manual typewriters from the '50s and '60s, mostly Underwoods and Olivettis. Each was marked PROPERTY OF THE UNITED NATIONS and numbered and dated with a blue tag. The machines probably hadn't been touched in five years.

My curiosity aroused, I set off to locate the Typewriter Repair Unit. I found it at the very bottom of the U.N. bureaucracy. Literally. Room B3-40 was in the catacomb of workshops deep beneath the building. (There is also a vast printing operation and a U.N.-vehicle repair shop.) After descending a back stairway, I arrived at a locked steel door. I knocked. After some time, the door opened.

The small room was occupied by two middle-aged men. One was smartly dressed in a jacket and tie. The other had tattoos on his arms and wore a blue work-shirt emblazoned with the U.N. crest. Crowding in around them, lining the room from floor to ceiling, were hundreds of old typewriters. On a work bench in one corner lay several typewriters in states of considerable disrepair, their innards hanging out, like half-gutted chickens.

I asked about the typewriters. The men said they would be happy to speak to me, but first I would have to get approval from the head of their unit. They dialed her number. She was friendly but told me that she could not give me permission. For that I would have to talk to the head of the Technical Innovations Committee. And he was not in.

She then transferred me to someone else, who was considerably less friendly. No, I could not speak to the repairmen. Yes, I should immediately leave the office. I apologized to the two men, who apologized back. "That's how it is here," one sighed.

That afternoon I spent nearly an hour on the phone with various departments on the upper floors of the U.N. tower, attempting to win permission to talk to the typewriter repairmen. To no avail. Some of the people I talked to had never even heard of the Typewriter Repair Unit. Finally, a worker in the Department of Public Information told me to submit a written request for an interview and wait for a response. I should expect something in longhand, I suppose.

SIMON WORRALL

Simon Worrall is a correspondent for the London *Sunday Times Magazine*.

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States, President Bush wanted his ally and personal friend Brian Mulroney, whose political career in Canada was obviously finished even in late 1991. But even though Canada has been somewhat sympathetic to Third World causes over the years, this infuriated Third World ambassadors, forcing the withdrawal of Mulroney's name.

Boutros-Ghali lobbied energetically for the job. He attempted to defuse concern about his age (he was 70 when he took over) by promising to retire after only one five-year term in order to write two books—one about negotiation, the other about Camp David. It did not escape attention that a secretary-general who would not seek re-election could be much more independent.

The Bush administration was opposed to Boutros-Ghali—he was considered too old, and there were doubts about whether his background as a diplomat would give him the political and managerial skills needed to run the U.N. Boutros-Ghali, though, could count on the support of the Africans, though they would have preferred a black sub-Saharan African. In the end, French support for the Egyptian proved to be decisive. After a Norwegian (Trygve Lie), a Swede (Dag Hammarskjöld), a Burmese (U Thant), an Austrian (Kurt Waldheim) and a Peruvian (Javier Pérez de Cuellar), it was time, French President François Mitterrand thought, for a Francophone secretary-general. Boutros-Ghali, educated at the Sorbonne, a former vice president of the Socialist International, a member of the Académie des sciences morales et politiques (Académie française) and a familiar presence from Franco-African conferences, fit the bill. The French quietly lined up enough votes for Boutros-Ghali, who won an easy election in late November 1991.

Though it is now almost forgotten, there was a brief period in the spring of 1992 when the Bush administration, pleased with the secretary-general's initial bureaucratic reforms, reconsidered its initial hostility. Boutros-Ghali put some top officials on annual contracts, cut fourteen high-level jobs and seemed to make a priority of streamlining the Secretariat. At the same time, Boutros-Ghali was being criticized by the Arabs for being soft on Israel and by others in the Third World for being a lackey of the West; a Mexican cartoon depicted him as a slave offering the U.N. to the new pharaoh, Uncle Sam.

The new secretary-general soon became well-known for sharp Boutrosisms. He reportedly accused the Security Council of caring more about the Yugoslav crisis—"a rich man's war"—than about Somalia. He snapped at one journalist that Bosnia was better off than at least ten places in the world: "I can give you a list." He may well have been right, but it was not the thing to say during a trip to Sarajevo in the depths of winter. Even the Africans felt his sting—he told African envoys that they must stop blaming colonialism for all their problems. He also told them Somalia had been ignored because, while Europeans called him several times a day about Yugoslavia, no Africans ever called him.

It was not sarcasm, however, but pride that ultimately embittered relations between Boutros-Ghali and the Security Council. In late spring of 1992 the Security Council ordered the secretary-general to find a way to bring an end to the siege of Sarajevo. By mid-July Britain's Lord Carrington, the European Community's envoy in Yugoslavia, had tentatively persuaded the three warring sides in Bosnia to surrender their heavy weapons to U.N. control. The Security Council, meeting on July 17 in the absence of Boutros-Ghali, agreed that action needed to be taken quickly on the agreement. It ordered the secretary-general to prepare a report on the logistics.

On July 20, 1992, Boutros-Ghali shocked Security Council ambassadors with an acerbic letter rebuking them for failing to consult him before considering a plan for U.N. soldiers in Bosnia. He was furious at the idea that the U.N. had to put its resources at the disposal of the E.C. in the Balkans. He was just as angry at what he perceived to be the Security Council's peremptory attitude. "I am, of course, at the service of the Security Council," he wrote. "At the same time, however, I would hope that my views would be ascertained in areas which are clearly in my competence." Around the same time he suggested that attacks against him in the British press could be attributed to the fact that he was a "wog" (in British slang, Worthy Oriental Gentleman).

This was the most open challenge to the authority of the Security Council since Hammarskjöld had assumed the role of an independent actor and confronted the Soviet Union and the Western powers during the 1960 Congo crisis. And the incident that gave rise to it was at least in part Boutros-Ghali's own fault. His unwillingness to work through channels and delegate authority keeps him so busy that he sometimes skips Security Council meetings. It was his absence from the July 17 meeting—he said he was too busy dealing with crises in Libya and Cyprus—that led to the midsummer blowup, and from then on, the series of miscalculations that have led to the current catastrophe in the Balkans.

Not just personality, but philosophy, may have made it inevitable that Boutros-Ghali and the Western powers on the Security Council would be at odds. To understand Boutros-Ghali's enthusiasm for supranational organization, it is important to bear in mind his education and age. He was in his early 30s when the 1955 Bandung Conference signaled the emergence of the Third World as an entity. He was a member of an Egyptian state for which Third Worldism was an important complement (and perhaps rival) to Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism. With India and Yugoslavia, Egypt was one of the founding members of the Nonaligned movement.

The thought of the French left has undoubtedly placed its mark on Boutros-Ghali. The concept of the Third World, for example, is French in its origins. The

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contemporary figure whom the secretary-general most resembles is Jacques Delors, the president of the European Commission, the E.C.'s equivalent of the Secretariat. Both men have been favorites of the Elysée Palace, Delors being a close associate of Mitterrand's. Like Boutros-Ghali, Delors has tried to increase the independent power of his office, antagonizing heads of state who thought he was encroaching on their sovereign prerogatives. Delors, too, has been known for delivering undiplomatic bombshells while visiting E.C. member countries, in an effort to create public pressure on governments. Boutros-Ghali's version of world federalism is very similar to the federalist ideal that animates Delors in Europe, but on a much larger scale.

A clue to the strength of Boutros-Ghali's belief in international organization may be found in his call, after the Gulf war, for an all-Arab parliament and a petro-bank to transfer wealth from oil-rich Arab nations to oil-poor countries such as Egypt. Such grand architectonic visions of rational organization perhaps seem more credible to someone from the land of the Suez Canal and the Pyramids. During the 1980s Boutros-Ghali was in charge of negotiations among the nine countries sharing the Nile. He is said to be passionate about the subject of water sharing, which brings together themes important in his public statements and diplomatic work—problems transcending state boundaries, the need for new levels of international cooperation, novel forms of supranational organization.

The grandest of all his designs is his blueprint for a new world police force. Boutros-Ghali does not want to enhance merely the authority and prestige of the secretary-general of the United Nations; he wants to dramatically increase the power of the office.

At the first Security Council summit ever held, on January 31, 1992, the United States and other Security Council members asked the secretary-general to present a plan for improving U.N. preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking. "An Agenda for Peace," issued on June 17, 1992, was Boutros-Ghali's answer. Many of the secretary-general's proposals for improving the financing and deployment of peacekeeping missions—for example, the standardization of equipment and training among designated units of various armies—make excellent sense.

Less compelling—and yet far more revealing—is the secretary-general's enthusiasm for more ambitious military efforts by the U.N., reflected in the divisions that emerged some time ago between the United States and the secretary-general over the control of possible international combat forces in Bosnia. The United States wanted only a green light from the U.N. for an operation that would be controlled by NATO. The model would have been the Persian Gulf and Korean wars, in which the Security Council merely authorized the United States to direct military operations on its behalf. Boutros-Ghali, on the other hand, wanted such forces to be under U.N. control.

Furthermore, according to the "Agenda," while "peace enforcement" operations would be authorized by the Security Council, the forces themselves "would be under the command of the secretary-general." "If I could say I will send troops in the next three days," Boutros-Ghali has explained, "this would have an impact completely different from saying I will have troops in the next three months." Boutros-Ghali wants units of national military forces to be permanently at the disposal of the Security Council as "a means of deterring breaches of the peace," even though he acknowledges that such forces "may perhaps never be sufficiently large or well enough equipped to deal with a threat from a major army equipped with sophisticated weapons," such as Iraq. This being the case, there is a danger that these units would serve as trip-wires—embroiling member states in escalating wars on the decision of the U.N. rather than of national governments.

In addition to promoting a commander in chief role for the secretary-general that the drafters of the U.N. charter almost certainly did not intend, Boutros-Ghali advocates an expansive construction of the U.N. Charter, redefining threats to international peace and security in such a way as to justify practically any conceivable U.N. intervention in the affairs of a country. It is worth remembering that the cold war was not the only reason the U.N. has been cautious about intervening in civil wars. In the early 1960s the 20,000 Blue Helmets in the Congo launched three offensives against the secessionist state of Katanga in the name of "self-defense." The secessionist movement was shattered, after a massive loss of life, and the Congo was reunited, chiefly to the benefit of the unspeakable Mobutu Sese Seko. It is somewhat disturbing that the energetic and independent secretary-general to whom Boutros-Ghali is most often compared is the one identified with the Congo debacle, Hammarskjöld.

Comparing today's state system to the European Middle Ages, Boutros-Ghali has written: "Centuries were required before the struggle among monarchical and baronial forces was transformed into states capable of carrying out responsibilities in the fields of security, economy and justice. There is no doubt that the institutions of the U.N. system must travel such a path if chaos is to be avoided." Boutros-Ghali gets his European historical analogy wrong—the real equivalents of Europe's postfeudal nation-states today would not be U.N. agencies but rival regional blocs: the E.C., a North American community, an Asian bloc. For that matter, the medieval equivalents of Boutros-Ghali were not the servants of proto-national monarchies, but the clerical intellectuals and bureaucrats who dreamed of a united Christendom in which the supranational moral and diplomatic authority, the papacy, would wield executive power. It is not enough, for this secretary-general, to be emperor. He wants to be pope too. •

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HOLIDAY IN CAMBODIA

By Amitav Ghosh

So massive and awe-inspiring a presence was the United Nations' Transitional Authority in Cambodia at its full strength that the small, relatively isolated country where it was based seemed to shrink in comparison. Indeed in Phnom Penh there was sometimes a sense that if all the participants in Cambodian politics were somehow to disappear, like the Cheshire cat, UNTAC and the elections would be the smile that remained.

I was at a friend's house in Phnom Penh one evening early this year when the BBC broadcast a startling bit of news. Several people were in the room, but the silence was complete as everyone listened, in increasing astonishment. The report began by announcing that the "State of Cambodia" had been conducting a countrywide offensive against the Khmer Rouge over the last several weeks. The source quoted was UNTAC. Though most of the people in the room were UNTAC employees, none knew anything about an offensive. I myself had been traveling in some of the areas included in the report. I had met many people, but nobody had mentioned an offensive. Smiles broke out as the report went on to say that the offensive may have jeopardized the Cambodian peace process. When it suggested UNTAC might even be forced to call off the elections, there was a shout of laughter.

For the next few days the international news media made much of the "offensive." Then it turned out that the offensive was not quite what it seemed. The UNTAC spokesman's office had merely chosen to release accumulated reports of minor engagements and routine exchanges of gunfire. Seen together, they had created the impression of a major offensive.

For me, the most telling part of the episode was the laughter that greeted the report. At that time, with several months to go before the elections, the situation in the country looked none too promising. Yet even then the suggestion that the U.N.'s operation might be jeopardized seemed nothing short of ludicrous.

The Cambodia operation is the most ambitious the U.N. has ever undertaken. Some 20,000 people from forty-six countries had been deployed under the auspices of UNTAC at a cost of almost $2 billion. For a time Cambodia boasted the unprecedented distinction of having one U.N. employee to every 400 of its own inhabitants. With this kind of investment there could be little doubt that the U.N. would stay the course and that elections would be held. The future of all such U.N. operations was on trial; U.N. personnel were well aware that thousands of highly paid jobs were at stake. The political situation in Cambodia and the exigencies of local politics were, if not irrelevant, then at least secondary to the institutional dynamics that were brought into play.

As it happens, the elections went off better than many predicted. But the well-earned clamor that attended this success ought not to obscure the fact that in many respects the peace process still failed. The principal military factions—the State of Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge—have not disarmed their forces, and the latter appears to have actually made use of UNTAC's presence to expand the territory under its control. The election's victors, Prince Norodom Ranariddh and the FUNCINPEC party, will not be able to translate their mandate into an effective administration without massive military and financial aid, and without a continuing large-scale U.N. presence. And the U.N. has already vastly overspent its budget in Cambodia: it simply cannot afford to maintain a large-scale presence there much longer.

The end of the cold war has led to a dramatic expansion in the U.N.'s peacekeeping efforts; in the last four years it has embarked on more operations than it did in the four previous decades. In the next few years those operations likely will grow faster still. The very fact of the U.N.'s interventionism is a guarantee of that, for it provides an incentive for conflicts to be taken to the point of intercession. As the U.N.'s most ambitious undertaking to date, the Cambodian elections are a milestone in the history of that expansion. It was possibly because the elections were also a forecast about the kind of peace the U.N. envisages that Cambodia was briefly the focus of global attention this year.

Perhaps the most elusive unit within UNTAC is the "Strategic Investigation Team." UNTAC's mandate

continued on page 24

AMITAV GHOSH is the author most recently of *In an Antique Land* (Knopf).

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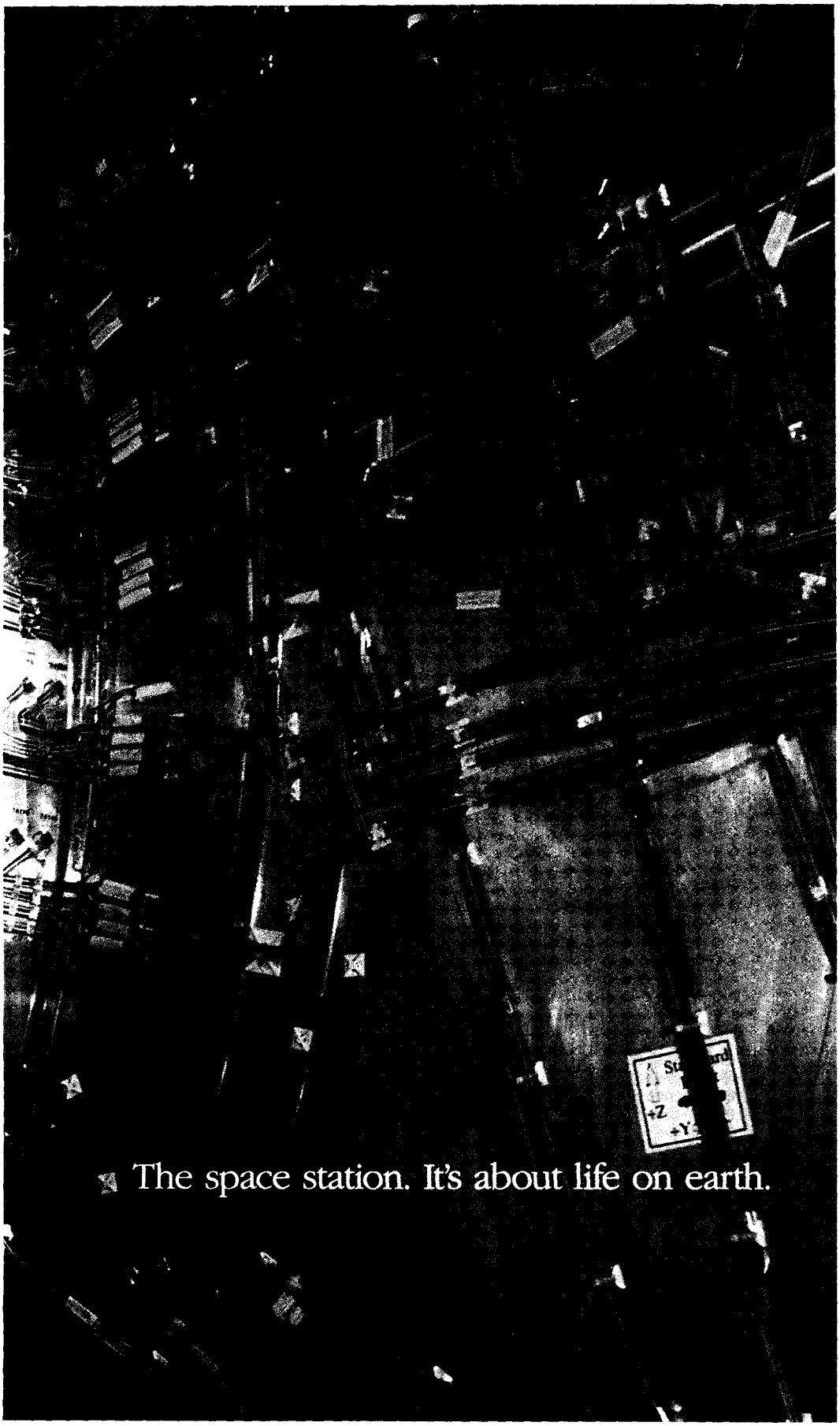

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requires it to verify the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Cambodia—"foreign forces" serves effectively as an euphemism for "Vietnamese"—and one of the team's jobs is to investigate allegations about the presence of Vietnamese soldiers on Cambodian soil.

The task is an unusually difficult one, for its performance tends to lead to an infinite regress of begged questions, many of which belong among those vast imponderables whose answers are being sought with blood and bullets all over the world today—questions of nationality and ethnicity, difference, belonging and freedom. In Cambodia these issues are particularly perplexing, for over the last couple of centuries the region's already complex patterns of ethnic distribution have been further complicated by war and colonization. During the peace process the ethnic issue became critical because of the Khmer Rouge's repeated allegations that 2 million to 3 million armed Vietnamese were living in Cambodia in disguise.

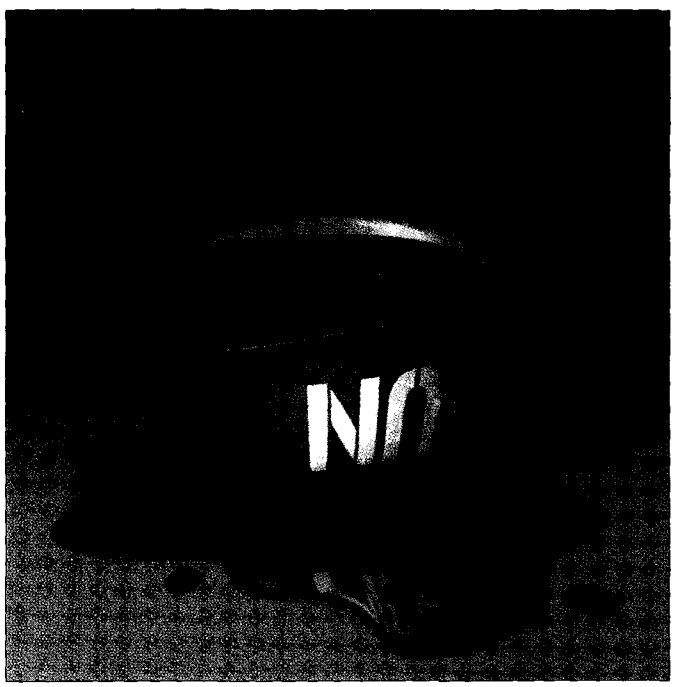

ILLUSTRATION BY M. ILIĆ AND A. ARCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The term "disguise" has a charged meaning in the rhetoric of the current Khmer Rouge leadership: it embodies the ultimate pathology of nationalist thought, where the national and racial Other becomes so pervasive that it is distinguishable from the Self only in death. When Pol Pot held power in the late '70s, his bloodiest purges were directed against his own eastern-zone cadres on the grounds that they were "Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds."

Today those genocidal conceptions play a greater part than ever in the Khmer Rouge's ideology. A recent defector, describing his political training with the group, told U.N. officials that "as far as the Vietnamese are concerned, whenever we meet them we must kill them, whether they are militaries or civilians, because they are not ordinary civilians but soldiers disguised as civilians. We must kill them, whether they are men, women or children, there is no distinction, they are enemies. Children are not militaries, but if they are born or grow up in Cambodia, when they will be adult, they will consider Cambodian land as theirs. So we make no distinction. As to women, they give birth to Vietnamese children."

The personnel who staffed UNTAC's Strategic Investigation Team, military officers for the most part, were not given to pondering the implications of their duties. Even less were they inclined to discuss those duties with outsiders. But it so happened that I struck up a friendship with an officer who was serving in the team—I shall call him T.C.

By inclination T.C. was no less tight-lipped than his colleagues, but he sometimes found it hard to turn his mind entirely from the assignments he had to perform. For he too was from a part of the world where dilemmas of the kind he was required to resolve were posed in bloody and bewildering forms. He was not unaware of the possibility that at some point in the future people he knew at home might also have their fates decided by a young officer from a distant continent who would have to make decisions about their linguistic or ethnic identity. It was he, not I, who first used the analogy of ethnic cleansing.

Some of the reports his office received about people alleged to be Vietnamese were clearly denunciations intended to settle scores between neighbors and within families. But as far as his team was concerned, the mere fact of an individual's ethnicity was irrelevant: UNTAC was concerned solely with foreign military personnel—not with Cambodia's long-settled Vietnamese or Chinese minorities, nor with economic migrants (whom UNTAC's spending power had attracted in large numbers). The problem was that in a country with a drafted army, like Vietnam, most able-bodied men had served in the military and could, at a stretch, be described as soldiers, even if they happened to have come to Phnom Penh to work in a restaurant. Besides, like every army, the Vietnamese had left behind a number of deserters and stragglers.

On one occasion T.C. and his team traveled to a village deep in the countryside to investigate a report that seemed to be well documented. But upon talking to the man in question, T.C. started to have doubts. The man denied being Vietnamese; he spoke fluent Khmer and was married to a Khmer woman. He was very poor; he lived with his wife and children in a tumbledown, thatch-walled shack. Reluctant to add to their evident misery, T.C., a family man himself, was all too willing to believe him. But the man broke down under interrogation. He admitted to being Vietnamese and to having come into the country with the army. He was not a soldier, he insisted; he had worked as an interpreter for the army and had decided to stay behind in his wife's village after the army withdrew. T.C. would

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have been glad to accept his story at face value, for by this time the man's wife and children had begun to weep. But then, on a tip from some people in the village, his team searched the man's hut and found a gun. The man claimed that he had only acquired it recently, for self-defense. At this point, however, there was nothing T.C. could do; he had to report him. Until then, this was the closest T.C. had come to discovering a Vietnamese soldier in disguise. At the end of the story, T.C. commented: "And I would easily have taken him for Khmer if our language expert hadn't been present. He's very good at picking out Vietnamese."

I was immediately curious, because I had been told by many knowledgeable people that it is often impossible to tell the difference between ethnic Khmer and Vietnamese, even for Cambodians. I remembered an account, in an UNTAC report, which said that a Cambodian had once asked an UNTAC officer whether there was a machine that could identify a person's ethnicity; he was disappointed to hear that there wasn't. I was very keen to discover what manner of expert it was who had the job of filling in for that machine.

After some effort, I contrived to arrange a meeting. I do not know exactly what I had expected, but it was certainly not the person it turned out to be. He was a young Westerner, tall in the way that used to be called willowy, with untidy shoulder-length hair; he was wearing colorful, roughly woven clothes of the kind that street vendors sell in the subway stations of cosmopolitan cities. I shall call him Mike.

Mike had acquired an interest in Indochina as an undergraduate and had eventually gone on to obtain a degree in area studies. He had spent several years in Vietnam and Cambodia and was fluent in the languages of both countries. He was good company in a friendly, easy-going way. He read Gabriel García Márquez and *Granta*, avoided red meat and believed in many admirable causes. But for all that, when I asked him about the Strategic Investigation Team his answer was abrupt and immediate. "I can't talk about that at all," he said.

I didn't want details, I told him. I just wanted to ask a few general questions. For example, could Cambodians always tell the difference between ethnic Khmer and Vietnamese? "No," he said. "Cambodians admit that there are situations in which they wouldn't be able to tell the difference." "What do you look for when you try to decide?" I asked. "Sometimes it's just glaringly obvious," he said. "By that person's profession, by their linguistic abilities. By the way they look. But that's not such a good indicator. You can't just look. You have to talk to them, ask some questions, use whatever resources you have to try and determine what they are."

When he first became interested in Indochina, I asked, had it ever occurred to him that being a student of its languages and cultures would one day put him in a position where it was he who would draw the lines that demarcated them? "When I accepted the job," he said, "I made a commitment to use my skills in it.... When I'm called upon to give an opinion I always qualify it with whatever doubts I have. But I just accompany the teams. I'm only a translator."

I pointed out that it was possible to take a different view: to argue that the military men who staffed the teams were merely the jailors and he the judge, since they were only enforcing a set of rules, while it was he who represented the body of knowledge that gave those rules their force. His response was the same that decent, well-intentioned functionaries have given throughout this century in similar circumstances. He said, "I'm just doing my job."

Mike was right, of course: he was merely helping in a job that had been thrust upon UNTAC by the terms of its mandate. And UNTAC, to its great credit, has been circumspect and scrupulous in its treatment of allegations about the presence of Vietnamese in Cambodia. But for all that, a question still remains: Why should the world's largest and most important international organization be implicated in the task of defining a country's ethnic boundaries? That the question should be asked at all is of course a tribute to the U.N. As the floodwaters of xenophobia, ethnic nationalism and religious hatred rise, more and more people around the world look to it to articulate a credible alternative to parochial and nationalistic patterns of politics.

But these expectations are unrealistic because the nation-state is precisely the barrier with which the U.N.—following the dominant pattern in world politics—hopes to contain extremist nationalism. The principle that guides its functioning in situations where it intervenes is thus to restore or conjure up a nation-state. Electoral processes are a step toward that end; where the demands of democracy and the nation-state run afoul of each other, it is the latter that will prevail. Thus in Cambodia, in the interests of "national reconciliation," the U.N. went to extraordinary lengths to accommodate the Khmer Rouge—a political group whose beliefs and practices are as inimical to democracy as any in human history.

Yet the entities that result from these efforts are clearly not nation-states in the traditional sense, since the nation-state is by definition sovereign, and the U.N.'s very presence contradicts that principle. It could be argued that today sovereignty resides exactly where the U.N.'s peacekeepers do not: the U.N. has not intervened in Ulster or Tibet, for example, because it has been excluded by genuine, as opposed to nominal, sovereignty.

The peculiar paradox of the U.N. in the post cold war world is that it has become its own negation. In accepting a role as global midwife, it ensures that the number of the world's yet unborn nation-states will steadily increase; yet in the act of delivering them it renders them stillborn. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Unafraid of Virginia Woolf

Some projects in art are doomed from the start. For instance, the ballet of *Hamlet* that I once saw. It wasn't done by Balanchine for Baryshnikov, but even if those men had been involved, though it would have been blessedly improved, it still would have been doomed.

Sally Potter, a young Englishwoman of evident brains and talent, has written and directed a film of **Orlando** (Sony Classics). The film itself makes clear that she understood most of the difficulties involved in adapting Virginia Woolf's book. But the film also makes clear that she didn't quite grasp the inevitable. Woolf's work is in the form that it's in because that's what it *is*.

One basic problem, as Potter did see, is not so much with the story—which presents problems enough—but with the prose: how to transmute it into film. For instance, after Orlando calls aloud her lover's name: "The beautiful, glittering name fell out of the sky like a steel blue feather." "Film *that*, Potter," she doubtlessly said to herself about that and about a hundred other instances in the book. She took steps. She engaged Alexei Ridionov, the very best of the Russian cinematographers whose work I've seen, and with him she contrived sequences that in themselves are gorgeous, evocative, austere, lush. Halations often crown scenes like aureoles.

The trouble is that all these sequences don't meld into the Woolf tissue, and without that tissue the book is only a fantastic tale. We can imagine that after Potter showed one or another sequence to people—possibly to backers—they said, "That's it. You've got it. Now for the whole thing." But the whole thing is precisely what isn't here. Probably couldn't be. Twenty-five years ago Mary Ellen Bute made a film modestly called *Passages from James Joyce's Finnegans Wake*, and, within scale, she succeeded better in her venture than Potter does here.

I don't mean to rank Woolf with Joyce. For this reader, *Orlando* is a lesser work than some claim. In the course of the book the disparaging poet Nicholas Greene says of Sir Thomas Browne that "he was for writing poetry in prose and people soon got tired of such conceits as that." It was brave of Woolf to include that line because it states her own book's risk-taking—the reader's feeling after a while that a slog through a barnyard might be a welcome respite from the empyrean. Still, there *is* the empyrean in the book, and we're constantly aware of Potter's gifted but unavailing attempts to reach it.

There's another trouble, too, inherent in the move to film. Woolf's fantasy follows her protagonist from the Elizabethan age to the present (which here is sensibly moved to our present from Woolf's 1928), with era stops along the way and with a gender change from male to female. For all these delicate impossibilities, Woolf enlists our collaboration simply by assuming that readers, taken by the manner of the telling, will work the necessary magic themselves. It's a cunning call to partnership with her, which flatters us and succeeds.

But film doesn't need that collaboration. Film is the very home of ascendancy over the literal, the earthbound. Changes of place and century and sex, in an instant, offer no problem whatsoever and need no kind of collaboration from the audience. Many decades of filmic miracles have left us, in a sense, imaginatively slothful because we needn't lift a figurative finger. Fantasy on film demands less. It's "normal." On the screen, *Orlando* almost gets jostled into the *Time Bandits* genre.

Some lesser quibbles. Why is *Othello* misquoted? Why is Orlando's eventual son changed to a daughter? This upsets the gender cycle that Woolf presumably had in mind. Why insert such banal locutions as "Goodbye. Good luck"?

On the other hand, some of Potter's touches are fine. Queen Elizabeth's arrival at Orlando's stately home is a really royal progress. A tea party that the eighteenth-century Orlando attends, with Swift and Addison and Pope, is good pastiche fun. The gauzy-mysterious palace of a Middle Eastern potentate has pleasant *Arabian Nights* languor.

Some of the performances are striking. Quentin Crisp, in a nod to the story's androgyny, plays Elizabeth and is grandly sour as the old queen. It's she who bids Orlando, her young favorite, never to age. (However, she certainly doesn't bid him to become female. That comes later.) Heathcote Williams, himself a notable playwright, overenunciates amusingly as Greene, the Elizabethan literary malcontent, and in a witty casting

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Children of Fate. *Sicilians. A documentary made in 1961 interwoven with one made in 1991 about the same people, to show human flaw and force, grief and grim humor. Engrossing. (Reviewed 5/14/93)* **Un Coeur en Hiver.** *In the Parisian world of music, a man lives without much warmth or engagement yet perfectly contentedly—which no one believes. (6/7/93)* **Much Ado About Nothing.** *Glorious. Four Americans in the cast don't much help, but Emma Thompson and Kenneth Branagh, under Branagh's direction, sail high with the others through this slightly shadowed bright comedy. (5/10/93)* **The Music of Chance.** *Paul Auster's novel transmuted with exactly the right sleek mystery and macabre circumstance. The strange results of a poker debt, acutely directed by Philip Haas. (6/21/93)* **—SK**

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maneuver, Greene also appears later as a modern money-minded publisher. John Wood, exquisite actor, is the Archduke Harry, looking like a Rowlandson cartoon. Charlotte Valandrey, as Sasha, Orlando's Russian light o' love, is enchanting. Billy Zane, as the female Orlando's nineteenth-century lover, here made an American, is a true romantic presence.

Tilda Swinton as Orlando is insufficient. She—here s/he might be permitted—fills the first need: she resembles Vita Sackville-West. Literary history's most open secret is that *Orlando* was an elegant love letter to Woolf's lesbian inamorata. (Three of the photographs in the book, supposedly of Orlando, are in fact of Sackville-West.)

Swinton has subtlety—her line readings are sometimes almost chordal, freighted with more than one meaning. But she has no whiff of fire. This is a drastic loss in a character who, as male or female, goes lovemaking through the ages. Swinton's declarations of passion—for people, for poetry, for life—come right from the refrigerator.

Potter's directing often has freshness. At the very start she gives us a hint of it. The Elizabethan Orlando is striding back and forth under a great tree (the same tree under which the film ends), and Potter's camera, at a fair distance, moves counter to Orlando's striding, gliding left when he goes right and vice versa. She keeps him centered on the screen, but she avoids tracking him tritely.

Potter's decision to have Orlando occasionally play to the camera is in fact the closest that the film comes to the invitations of the book. The way that Potter takes Orlando through an immense maze in a formal garden, to emerge radically changed, has humor and verve.

But for all of this, for all the splendid costumes and the magnificence of such sequences as the festival on the frozen Thames, the film just keeps reaching and hoping.

Erratum. Reviewing *American Heart* (June 14), I wrote that "Bell once presented these facts unglutinously"—not, as printed, "ungluttonously." •

Logic and Sadness

By Colin McGinn

Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life by Joseph Brent

(Indiana University Press, 512 pp., $35)

"The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by truth and the object represented by this opinion is the real." In that famous sentence, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) enunciated the doctrine for which he is most celebrated, and showed the heart of his philosophical position.

The view of truth and reality that he proposed in that sentence, and in his many writings, inverts the conception that has some claim to be regarded as standard: that inquiry indeed aims at discovering truth, and hence at uncovering reality, but that there is always a logical gap, capable of provoking skepticism, between the beliefs that inquiry yields and the facts that it aims to represent. No matter how hard you try to be right, you might always be wrong, however plural "you" are. The truth of a belief can never consist in its being believed, even when it is arrived at by the utmost diligence. But Peirce closes this ominous gap between belief and truth by defining truth in terms of the eschatology of inquiry: truth simply is that which competent inquirers will eventually come to agree it is. It follows that when doubt and disagreement cease, truth will be the inevitable result.

Peirce's notion of truth does not permit a situation in which belief reaches a steady state but fails to match the way things are, since there is no more to truth than communally accepted belief. When we say that inquiry aims at truth, we mean that it aims at socially certified agreement. We do not converge on the same beliefs because they are true; they are true because we converge on them. Once inquiry has reached its end, reality is ours. Indeed, there is no distinguishing any longer between us and it. In the limit, thought and reality merge.

If truth is to be defined in terms of inquiry, then we need to understand the nature of inquiry. That was Peirce's lifelong preoccupation. He sought to elicit the processes and the procedures of reasoning, the means by which the fixation of belief occurs. In particular, he wanted to understand that peculiar way of forming beliefs known as "scientific method," which he took to be the best way of forming beliefs yet invented. The study of reasoning in general he called Logic; and he distinguished three branches of the subject: deduction, induction, abduction.

His own distinctive contribution, later advocated by Karl Popper and others, was to recognize the importance and the peculiarities of what he called abduction: the process by which the mind generates, in a kind of guessing, or in an imaginative leap, hypotheses that attempt to explain the data while going radically beyond the data, but are still testable in their light. Such hypotheses, which occur not only in science but also, for Peirce, even in our most basic perceptual judgments, are not deduced from the evidential premises; nor are they inductive generalizations from them. They are creative efforts to represent how the world has to be in order for the data to be rendered explicable. Without this method of reasoning, which is now known as "inference to the best explanation," human thought would be crippled.

But such a procedure also raises profound puzzles. How can mere guessing ever yield objective knowledge, and what is it that guides our guesses? The method of abduction looks workable only if there is a deep affinity between what the human mind naturally generates and the nature of reality: only if, that is, reality is somehow constituted by the operations of mind. And that was indeed Peirce's master view: science can be rational only if truth consists in what human inquirers converge on. Abduction reliably produces truth for Peirce because truth is to be defined as that which abduction produces. In the last analysis, then, inquiry is all there is, the persistent pursuit of stable belief. There is no question of belief corresponding, or failing to correspond, to something outside of it.

This doctrine is the essence of pragmatism, the philosophical position for which Peirce is most renowned. It is, as he was well aware (though others have not been), a form of idealism. Yet it differs from other forms of idealism, from Berkeley or Hegel, by taking method—not ideas or sense data or souls or beliefs in themselves—to be

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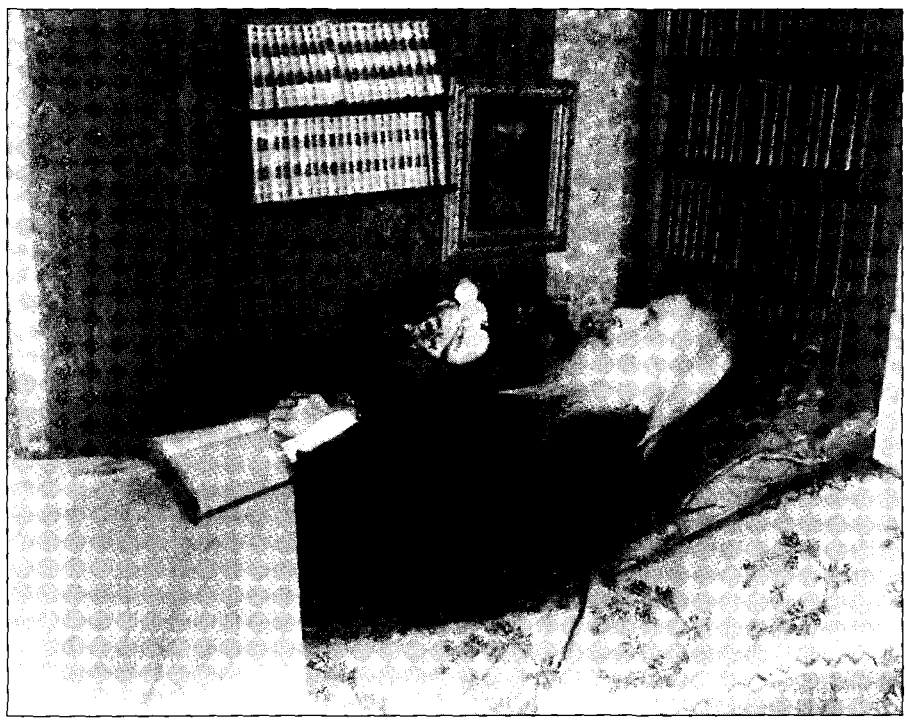
metaphysically basic. Objectivity is achieved by way of the interpersonal and dynamic corrections that method allows; and reality is established as the essentially evaluative norms of correct reasoning by which the mind is governed, plus the mental items to which these norms apply. The content of any conception is given by the method of inquiry we would use in order to investigate the object of that conception. In thus marrying idealism to logic, Peirce hoped to secure the objectivity of knowledge and its possibility.

Peirce's work on logic itself, as distinct from his insistence on its philosophical centrality, was also original and prescient. He did ground-breaking work in formal logic, most notably in devising a logic of relations and quantification, later developed by Kurt Schroder; and he noticed more clearly than anyone before him that an adequate logic had to be grounded in an account of representation, in what he called "semiotic." For reasoning proceeds by courtesy of signs, outer or inner, and these signs must have meaning if the beliefs produced are to have content. Thus Peirce was led to focus systematically on the relation between a sign, its object and the person for whom the sign has meaning. To understand science, Peirce had to do linguistics. (Chomsky has acknowledged a large debt.) The theory of meaning becomes the basis of epistemology, and epistemology, or the theory of inquiry, is the ultimate subject of metaphysics; here is the "linguistic turn" that became so characteristic of twentieth-century philosophy.

Signs, moreover, are shared between people, between those who cooperate in inquiry; and so the idea of a community of sign-using inquirers emerges as central to philosophical understanding. The community that Peirce prized so highly was essentially a linguistic community. Solipsism or individualism, which had marked so many earlier philosophies, rationalist or empiricist, idealist or realist, is thus abandoned. In place of the image of a solitary spectator or a cogitator seeking truth in hermetic isolation, Peirce proposes to inject a community of inquirers into his account of what makes knowledge possible. Thus knowledge has a sociology as well as a psychology. Each inquirer is subject to the communal standard supplied by logic, and expressed in a system of public signs, so that in the long run convergence of opinion is accomplished.

All these ideas, right or wrong, have a remarkably modern ring, though they were the work of a nineteenth-century thinker. Peirce must be counted with his almost exact contemporary Frege as a progenitor of contemporary philosophical thought, though he cannot be said to rival Frege's clarity, rigor or economy.



Courtesy Pike County Historical Society

PEIRCE ON HIS DEATHBED, APRIL 19, 1914

Both men saw that traditional logic was inadequate, and appreciated the need for a more systematic understanding of language and meaning. Both were mathematicians of note, whose approaches to logic were mathematically inspired. Frege was interested in deductive logic and its relevance to mathematical reasoning, and so his results were cleaner and sharper. Peirce's chief interests were in the much messier area of natural science and the logic appropriate to it. It is he who has a fair claim to have anticipated, for good or for ill, more of the course of twentieth-century philosophy, especially in epistemology and the philosophy of science. He was onto the right things before almost anyone else, and he deserves the routine recognition that he now receives. He was the greatest American philosopher.

So what kind of life did he have? Absolutely awful, I'm afraid. Really dreadful. Peirce's story bleeds with irony. It began promisingly, which makes the end even more depressing. His father, Benjamin Peirce, was a powerful and distinguished scientist at Harvard, and he was keen to instill in his precocious son the characteristics of genius, which he did with considerable success. Little personal discipline was imposed; superiority was assumed; arrogance was excused; the value of intellect, and not much else, was extolled. All little Charles had to do was be brilliant, which did not come hard to him.

The result of this education, however, was that Peirce was remarkably bad at everything except brilliance, especially everything practical or cooperative. Nor did he have much respect for those in authority, including his teachers. His unconventionality, his hubris and his lack of concern for consequences soon caught up with him. He was dismissed from every post he ever held, worked in a university for only a short time, spent his money recklessly and ended his life in poverty, virtual starvation and uneasy relations with the law. He had few friends and was shunned by the respectable. He never managed to complete the work on which he toiled for so long. Added to all this, he suffered from trigeminal neuralgia throughout his life, a condition that involves bouts of excruciating pain in the face, which he treated with morphine and cocaine, with predictably unsettling results. (His second wife was a virtual invalid, too.) He announced impending suicide with some regularity, and not without reason. He was tenaciously persecuted by men of academic power, whom he misguidedly trusted. He lived for much of his life in a state of anxiety and overwork, on the brink of emotional collapse.

Joseph Brent's biography, the first serious account of Peirce's life, tells the sad and harrowing story with sympathy and understanding, as well as exasperation.

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His book is thoroughly researched, amply documented and ably written. It is gripping, in a sober way. Quoting often from Peirce's letters and other writings, Brent allows us to understand more of this strange character than we might reasonably expect to understand. The follies and the misadventures begin to form a consistent pattern, though their underlying cause remains enigmatic.

Brent's account of Peirce's friendships, notably with his supporter William James, and of his enmities, of which there were several, are particularly well-handled. Peirce's fortunes were largely determined by the esteem and the affection of some, offset by the hostility and the dislike of others, who often had all the power—the most odious among them being Charles Norton Eliot and Simon Newcomb, pillars of the academic establishment. That Peirce's life and career were damaged, indeed ruined, by the intellectual ineptitude and the stuffed-shirt mediocrity of men such as these is made sufficiently clear, as are the adverse effects of the prim conformism of the society in which Peirce lived. Peirce's adulterous relation with the woman who would become his second wife was much held against him. His peers and his superiors seemed to have felt that his character and behavior would be corrupting to the young—where have we heard that before?—and so a university teaching position was not to be entrusted to him. Johns Hopkins even went to the extreme of firing all its untenured faculty and then promptly reinstating them, except for Peirce, as a way of getting rid of him. He never secured another academic position, despite many efforts. And all the while he was generally acknowledged to be a genius.

What strikes me now about Peirce's career, reading Brent's account of it, is the amount of time that he spent *not* doing philosophy. As a young man he trained in chemistry and physics, and his first day job was in geodesy, working for the United States Coast Survey. His specialty there was gravimetrics, and he spent enormous amounts of time in the company of pendulums, to the study of which he made important contributions. He also worked in astronomy and photometry, publishing a book in the latter field. He was an internationally renowned scientist before he reached his 40s. Recognition he had, and solid achievement, too; but employment he could not sustain, and eventually could not even secure.

He was fired from the Coast Survey, it seems, because of delays in the production of his scientific reports, backed up by the malign blindness of some supposed experts who were invited to comment on his work. The nadir came when, despite a recommendation from President Roosevelt himself, and strong support from leading scientists and philosophers, he was refused a Carnegie grant to complete his work in logic. Thereafter he scratched a living from writing reviews, mainly for *The Nation*, and relied upon the charity of friends and relatives. For periods he had to sleep rough in New York, having lost his house, and he often went for days without food. Naturally his already precarious health was ruined, not to speak of his sensitive spirit. But he carried on, as best he could, with his logic.

The ironies of Peirce's life are of a numbingly predictable kind. The great pragmatist, stressing the practical instrumental character of thought, proved unable to realize his own most cherished goals through the exercise of his own practical reason. He was a procrastinator, an evader of ugly realities, a reckless spender of money. He once characterized perception, arrestingly, as the "outward clash," castigating Hegel for excessive inwardness; but his own brushes with the external world were abrupt collisions, his own perception of reality being minimal.

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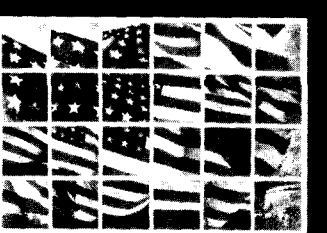

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For all his obsession with methodology, his own schemes tended to be high on madness and low on method. Some of his awkwardness in the world Peirce put down to the cerebral consequences of left-handedness, including his convolutions of speech (he was not, to put it mildly, a clear writer), and some may have come from drugs, but the quixotic and impulsive side of his character goes far beyond such causes. He seemed often to connive in his own undermining, as if challenging the world to take a swipe at him. And for all his championing of the cooperative in intellectual inquiry, his own work was largely solitary and idiosyncratic; his group instincts were not well-developed. The idea of community was pretty notional as far as Peirce's actual practice was concerned. One might be forgiven for suspecting, if it does not sound too pop-psychological, that his emphasis on method and agreement was a form of compensation for the opposite qualities in himself.

The most salient fact about Peirce as a thinker is his early and persistent fascination with logic, formal and informal. He ranked himself at the level of Leibniz and often said he was put on Earth by God in order to do logic. In this fascination he resembles the pioneers of twentieth-century philosophy—Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein and others. Much of this work, however, has now been done. It is hard to see how anyone today could be gripped in such a fanatical manner by a desire to set logic straight. Now logic *is* straight, thanks to these earlier obsessives.

I suspect that a large part of Peirce's career problem was simply that he was constantly preoccupied by something that cried out for preoccupation—the discoveries in logic were ripe for plucking, beckoning him to them. Instead of laboring over his tedious pendulum calculations, he was straining to think about logical matters; but he never found the time or the peace of mind to put in the effort needed to bring his ideas to fruition. He was thus continually thwarted in his own strongest inclinations, always setting up a kind of split or instability in his own activities. (How hard it would have been on the young Russell if he had been prevented from writing *Principia Mathematica.*) Only during the short period of teaching logic at Johns Hopkins do the signs of strain recede, resulting in an important and collaborative treatise on his deepest interest.

Speaking of the thwarting of work, Brent's account of the troubled history of his own book is a case in point. Written thirty years ago as a doctoral thesis in history, it took the efforts of the noted linguist Thomas Sebeok to track down the author and arrange for the original version to be revised for publication. This is a strange business, for the book is excellent in every way, and Peirce is a subject of extraordinary interest. The explanation, as Brent gives it, would appear to be that the philosophy department at Harvard University denied access to certain papers of Peirce's contained in the Houghton Library, and would not permit Brent to quote from Peirce's letters. He did not obtain permission until 1991. Brent says:

> While the delay in publishing Peirce's philosophical manuscripts can be attributed almost entirely to skepticism or disinterest [sic] on the one hand, and lack of funds on the other, the delay in producing a biography was directly caused by the inaccessibility of the biographical portion of the Harvard Peirce collection. This suppression was justified by its owners, the Harvard department of philosophy, on the grounds that there was information in the letters that would seriously damage Peirce's reputation and that must, therefore, be withheld in order to protect his reputation and the sensibilities of his family (and perhaps those of Harvard University).... The restrictive policy led to rumors about homosexuality, sexual promiscuity, chronic drunkenness, violence and drug addiction, and since there was no published evidence to either support or disprove such accusations, Peirce's reputation has varied according to rumor about the contents of his letters and the tastes of the persons concerned with it. In fact, many of the rumors were true, but because of the decision to deny access, the research which would have put his life into its true light, that of the dignity of deep tragedy, was discouraged or forbidden.

It is clear, after reading Brent's valuable book, that whoever it was at Harvard who made the decision to impede a biographical study of Peirce made a grave mistake. And it is a sad irony that this misguided policy should come from the very institution that did so much to ruin Peirce's life and career—even to the point of forbidding him for decades from lecturing to Harvard students, despite William James's recommendations. Was he really so difficult and controversial a man that he deserves this double blow to his reputation? It is hard not to feel the force of Sebeok's comment that Brent's book reveals "a seamy side to American academic polity, its sometime brutality and mendacity, and the often cruelly corrupt machinations of higher political authority." Yes, Peirce was a wayward and singular man, who played a leading part in engineering his own downfall: but he was also the victim of some mean-spirited and merciless individuals. He ended miserably, while they prospered and no doubt congratulated themselves. Reading this biography leaves one with a bad taste in the mouth; and it is the more worth reading because of it. That pain in Peirce's face sums it up.

COLIN MCGINN is professor of philosophy at Rutgers University and the author most recently of *Moral Literacy, or How to Do the Right Thing* (Hackett).

The Art of Sympathy

BY K. ANTHONY APPIAH

African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe by Doris Lessing

(HarperCollins, 442 pp., $25)

Early in *African Laughter*, Doris Lessing recalls a childhood visit to her brother's colonial school:

> Everything was clean and tidy and there were green English lawns. I felt alien to the place. This was because I was alien to the English middle class, playing out its rituals here, as if on a stage. I knew even then they were anachronistic, absurd and, of course, admirable in their tenacity.

It is the last phrase, the sting in the tail, that alerts you that this is Lessing, not some moralizing theorist. Absurd people, of course, have admirable traits: that is one of the ways in which moral life, even the most passive moral judgment, is intricate. In the face of the glaring injustices of racial domination in Southern Rhodesia, it is a moral achievement to keep such complexities in mind; and to do so requires a clear-eyed attention to the everyday details of human life.

It is unfashionable in the literary academy to discuss such worn-out themes as the moral vision of novelists,

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the sort of thing that Lionel Trilling did those long years ago; and it is correspondingly de rigueur to expatiate upon their politics, and to complain about them. Since Lessing has often been weighed in a "progressive" political scale—that is, according to her views on racism, communism and feminism—there has been an especially strong pressure to neglect those aspects of her moral imagination that cannot be reduced to politics. And this is a disaster, since distinguishing between morality and politics is especially important with a writer like Lessing, whose moral intuitions so strongly resist implementation as a social program.

Lessing's first and last lesson—a lesson that has been announced by theorists but can only be grasped, it seems, through narrative—is precisely the moral intricacy of human life. She seems to have come out of Africa already aware of this complexity. You might have thought she had learned it from the circumstances of her upbringing, were it not a secret that many with histories like hers have not known.

Her circumstances were extraordinary enough. Though she was born in Iran, in 1919, to British parents, Lessing was raised in Southern Rhodesia. Her father, Alfred Cook Tayler, invalided (like so many) in the First World War, married (like so many) the woman who had nursed him back to health. After his wartime experiences, Tayler "could not face being a bank clerk in England," as Lessing once wrote, and so he took a job with the Imperial Bank of Persia. On leave in England in 1925, he saw a Southern Rhodesian display at one of the empire exhibitions, discovered that he could buy 3,000 acres at 10 shillings an acre and emigrated "on an impulse" with his wife and two children, Doris and her younger brother, Harry.

The land on which they lived had been alienated, like most of Rhodesia, by the colonial government, which had crowded the Africans into what were called "Native Reserves." Her father grazed cattle. In an autobiographical essay, his daughter reports that he

> ... cultivated about 300 acres of his land; the rest was left unused. He employed between 50 and 100 black men, and their wages were 12s. and 6d. a month, with rations of maize meal, beans and a little meat. The laborers came from the Reserves, Nyasaland [Malawi], Portuguese territory [Mozambique]. They built themselves a mud hut in the "compound." They were given a day to do this.... They worked from six in the morning till six at night with an hour off at midday, seven days a week in the busy season. These were the conditions of the whole country: my father was a better, more humane employer than most. But no one can be more humane than an economic framework allows one to be.

The nearest white neighbors were several miles off, and Rhodesian racial etiquette kept the Tayler children from real friendship with black children. Her brother was away at boarding school. So Lessing grew up with books and with the African landscape. Though she was sent to a convent school in Salisbury (now Harare), she was allowed to stop her formal education at 14, staying on in the city to work for a couple of years as a nanny, before returning to the family farm, convinced of her calling as a writer. At home and after school she educated herself, reading "the best—the classics of European and American literature." Two years later, having written and destroyed some "bad novels," she returned to Salisbury to work. Then, on the brink of the Second World War, she married a Rhodesian civil servant, with whom she had two children.

In 1942, in her early 20s, after the failure of her first marriage, she joined the local Communist Party and became, as she says, a "rackety 'revolutionary,'" "interested in the possibilities of black resistance." She had learned, as she grew up, that she did not want to belong to

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the master race in a society of white masters and black servants. Now the party gave to her conviction a theoretical framework and helped to complete her shapeless education. The party also provided the introduction to Gottfried Lessing, her second husband, a German Communist, whom she married in 1945. In 1949 she left Lessing and made her way to London, bearing his name, their young son and the manuscript of her first novel. "Let us put it this way: I do not think marriage is one of my talents," she told Roy Newquist in the early '60's.

But if marriage was not one of her talents, writing was. The novel in her baggage, *The Grass is Singing* (1950), brought her immediate acclaim. There were seven reprints within five months; reviewers pronounced her the finest new novelist since the war. A year later she published her first short stories in *This Was the Old Chief's Country*. In the next few years she published novels and short stories regularly, mainly set in Africa; and in 1956 she made a return visit to the country of her youth (which she described in *Going Home*, her first travel book). Lessing was not to return to that country for more than a quarter century, though she continued to write about Africa into the late '60s. She was declared a "prohibited immigrant" by the prime minister of Southern Rhodesia, who once sharply told her: "I wasn't going to have you upsetting our natives."

DORIS LESSING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Though Lessing learned that she did not want to live as a white settler, she also discovered that white Rhodesia—for all its middle-class British snobbisms, its provincialism and tedium and its even more appalling blindness to the black lives that made possible its standard of living—was not without its virtues. This sense for the intricate has made Lessing impatient with politics and parties. The Rhodesian Communist Party, which was the creation of servicemen and various war exiles, was "so pure," she felt, that "if we had been in any other part of the world ... the beautiful purity of the ideas we were trying to operate couldn't have worked." Faced with the considerably less pure British Communist Party, with its deference to Stalin and its odious political correctness (the term in those days had rather more meaning than it does today), Lessing rebelled, leaving the Party in 1956, and not simply, she has insisted, out of disgust with the Russian invasion of Hungary. Her entrance into the Rhodesian Communist Party reflected the seriousness of her moral engagement with the evils of racial domination, and her departure from the British Communist Party reflected the same moral seriousness.

That Lessing would not stay long with the Party should have been obvious to anyone who had read *The Grass is Singing*. The novel begins with a newspaper report of the death, apparently at the hands of her "houseboy" Moses, of Mary Turner, a white woman on a remote Rhodesian farm. As the book unfolds, we live through the events that have led up to this unlikely murder, following always the life of its victim.

Mary Turner is a strange, sad woman, suffering under the burden of obligations imposed upon her as a white woman by the sad, strange conventions of a colonial settler society. The novel is intensely humane in its attentiveness to the minutest details of the mental life of this central character: her smallmindedness and her ambitions, her silent rage at her uncomprehending husband, her longing for the life of the small town where she had worked as a secretary before her marriage. As her mind goes and her husband becomes more and more distant, she begins a sexual dalliance—its true scope only hinted at, never quite clear—with Moses. And when, near the end, caught in a moment of intimacy with him by a white neighbor, she dismisses this black man disrespectfully, we understand—we know it is not our business to forgive—this betrayal of the only human meaning in the withered landscape of her existence.

Throughout her career Lessing has been able to enter sympathetically into the lives of ordinary, morally fallible people, living in circumstances that make nobility impossible. The capacity of her unloveliest characters to engage the human in each other—even when they have inherited a racism that blinds and separates, even when the physical burdens of old age have made their lives tedious to them—is one of the finest achievements of Lessing's fiction. Nothing could be further in spirit from the mechanics of socialist realism.

The fact that Lessing combines compassion with nuance is important to appreciating *African Laughter*, her ruminations on four visits that she made back to the country of her youth after it finally achieved its independence as Zimbabwe in 1980. Her strictures carry so much weight because they flow from a clear and sympathetic appreciation of the humanity of those whom she observes, and especially because she is able to turn the same beady eye on those she admires, and even, surprisingly often, on herself.

On the first of these visits, for example, in 1982, Lessing found herself talking to the "garden 'boy'—the old word

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still used, quite unself-consciously"—of a white family with whom she was staying. Once the gardener's employers were out of earshot, he asked her

> ... if he could come and work for me, he needed to better himself.... He said he had seen rich black people on television and in films, and he wanted to be like them. This took me back thirty odd years, to when I used to sell Communist newspapers around a certain "Coloured" (that was the correct word politically then for people of mixed race) suburb in old Salisbury. While I preached informed opposition to white domination, I was being stopped on every street corner by aspiring young men who wanted to go to America where everyone was rich. I used to give them gentle lectures on the need to think of the welfare of All before self-advancement. What a prig. What an idiot. I can see myself, an attractive but above all self-assured young woman ... with revolution as a cure for everything.

In our mistrustful times it will no doubt occur ungenerously to some that moments such as these are rhetorical ploys, designed to put careless readers off their guard: "See, I can criticize myself! You can have faith in my objectivity. You can rely on my criticisms of others." But this suspicious reading of such passages misses what is, I think, their moral thrust: they are meant to exemplify the balanced assessment of all sides, even one's own. Clearly Lessing believes that such balance is the only way to heal Zimbabwe's racial and ethnic wounds. Lessing, in short, is practicing what she preaches.

Another kind of skeptic will see in Lessing only another ex-lefty, banging on about the moral blindness of those who left the Party later than she did. This suspicion, too, is misplaced. Lessing is able to recognize the decent impulses that lie behind political rhetorics—on the left and the right—and that recognition does not weaken her loathing for oppression. The result is a kind of judicious human accounting, a credit here, a debit there, that is reflected in the episodic character of the book. Just when we have had too much of the bad news—corruption in high places, despair among the poor—Lessing reminds us of the splendid new energies released by the end of Rhodesian apartheid.

At least as important as this moral good sense is the clear-sighted human understanding that makes it possible. One is oneself fixed in the beam of Lessing's penetrating gaze from the first moments of the book. The opening chapter begins:

> Southern Rhodesia was a shield-shaped country in the middle of the map of Southern Africa, and it was bright pink because Cecil Rhodes had said the map of Africa should be painted red from Cape to Cairo, as an outward sign of its happy allegiance to the British Empire. The hearts of innumerable men and women responded with idealistic fervor to his clarion, because it went without saying that it would be good for Africa, or for anywhere else, to be made British. At this point it might be useful to wonder which of the idealisms that make our hearts beast faster will seem wrong-headed to people a hundred years from now.

At the start of this passage it might seem that we are being asked simply to mock Rhodes's ambitions or to condemn imperialism. But once Lessing has tempted us to this simple response (the irony of "happy allegiance" cheerfully baiting the trap) she deprives us of the confidence of our moral superiority. The British in Rhodesia, she points out soon, did not engage in genocide; they did build hospitals for "natives"; they banned alcohol out of paternalism, not out of spite. "If it is asked, How did these people, no more or less intelligent than ourselves, manage to accommodate so many incompatibles in their minds at the same time, then this belongs to a wider query: How and why do we all do it...?" Indeed, Lessing often suggests that our contemporary openness to these earlier sins of the fathers conceals from us our own new sins, among them the destruction of the natural world.

The book is pervaded with a kind of ecological gloom. When she is speaking on the first of her visits, in 1982, with three black men to whom she has offered a ride in her car, Lessing reflects:

> I wanted to talk about the emptying and thinning of the bush, how the animals had gone, and the birds and the insects, how this meant everything had changed; how myriads of small balances, hundreds in every small patch of bush, necessary for water, soil, foliage, climate, had been disturbed. I had already begun to suspect that these changes were more important than, even, the War, and the overthrow of the whites, the coming of the black government. Now, years later, I am sure of it. But I could not talk like this to these people then, at that time. It would have sounded like an irrelevance: at best, like one of the eccentricities the whites go in for.

This death of the bush is one of her themes, a theme that connects her with her own childhood in Southern Rhodesia and her own memories of what the bush meant to her as a child. She writes

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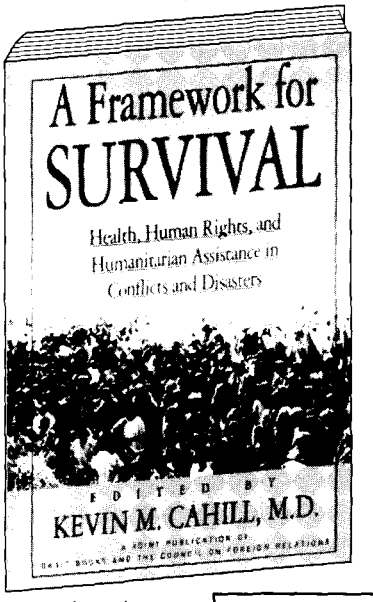

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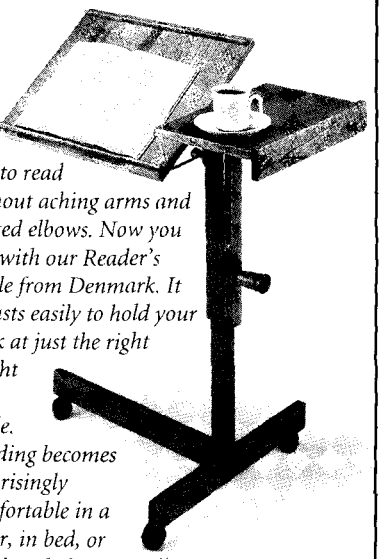

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of long-ago trips with her family through this landscape she loves; of lying in their encampment, surrounded by an enclosure of cut branches to keep out the leopards, sleeping on a platform of fresh grass under the stars. ("Being in the bush was to be with animals, one of them.") But the disappearance of the bush is more than the subjective loss of childhood, it is also the real end of the dawn chorus that woke the Taylers from those nights of wonder.

This concern for nature is something that binds Lessing to the world of her childhood *and* to the whites whom she visits in the present. Sometimes she suggests, as in some of her short stories, that the blacks, too, some of them, love this land, but she never quite puts her finger on their feelings. She cannot chart their sense of the landscape as she can map out the nature-worship of the strange white settler culture she grew up in.

This reticence about black sentiments is part of a long-standing pattern. In her work of the '50s, when Lessing was writing about Africa, it was almost never from an African point of view. The one exception is instructive. It is the short novel *Hunger*, a piece of socialist realism, which almost all her critics (the predictable exception being the Soviets) agree with Lessing in regarding as a failure. Lessing reports the origins of this story in her ruminations after a gathering of writers in Moscow in 1952, where the British contingent, united in little else, agreed that "writing had to be a product of the individual conscience, or soul." The Russians, of course, did not agree. Then, one hot day, after leaving the rest of the party on a tour of "a building full of presents for Stalin," Lessing sat down by herself and began to ruminate. Were they, the British writers, really right?

> ... after all, there was Dickens, and such a short time ago, and his characters were all good or bad—unbelievably Good, monstrously Bad, but that didn't stop him from being a great writer. Well, there I was, with my years in Southern Africa behind me, a society as startlingly unjust as Dickens's England. Why, then, could I not write a story of simple good and bad, with clear-cut choices, set in Africa? ...
>
> I tried, but it failed. It wasn't true. Sometimes one writes things that don't come off, and feels more affectionate towards them than towards those that worked.

One wonders, at first, if it is in reaction to this single conspicuous failure that Lessing settled on the most striking strategy of *African Laughter*: namely, its silence about the interior lives of black Zimbabweans.

This restraint sometimes disappoints. One longs for speculation about what some of the characters she meets are "really thinking." And yet, in the end, her reticence is another expression of her good sense. I think, by contrast, of Naipaul, with his confident epistemology, his perpetual certainty that he has penetrated the true meaning of the "native," even in lands he barely knows. And immediately I prefer Lessing, who, even in this land where she grew up, is willing (and then, after so many years' absence, only carefully) to speak just for the part of it she really knows.

That these two writers are, in this way, so different, is a reflection of the depths to which the culture that we share with them—this culture of the West—is committed to an epistemology of the skin. Because Naipaul is not white, he has been encouraged to believe that he knows where he is going in the non-white world; and he must distance himself from that world, or risk being identified with its failings. Because she is white, Lessing has been brought up to an equal certainty that she does not know her way among the black and the brown; and she can be confident that whatever these people do, and despite her upbringing among them, she will never be held responsible for their doings.

In truth, color has very little to do with it; but the reticence of color that seems to underlie Lessing's position leads to the right judgment. She does not know much of how life looks to the peasants and workers of Zimbabwe; and she knows, too, that the reason is not their color but their experience. Lessing shows us only the exterior of the black Zimbabweans, but still we are in her debt for what that view teaches us about what is happening in Zimbabwe.

And we owe Lessing an even more substantial debt for her interior portrait of the white community in its transition out of the trauma of losing the war. On the first of her visits, soon after the war's end, Lessing goes to visit her brother Harry, a staunch supporter of white minority rule who fought in the war in the bush. On their first evening together, they begin by avoiding the subject that divides them: his sister's "funny ideas" about black equality. An angry exchange almost ensues when Harry says, "I suppose you do still have those funny ideas about—well, about everything," and Lessing replies:

> "You could say that I have my funny ideas. You could say they've turned out not to be so funny in the end."
>
> At this he goes red, he is really angry. This is the moment when we could explode into argument. I say hastily, "Today, when I came past Marandellas, I remembered how we used to camp out there, near the school."
>
> He smiles, and nods, meaning, Yes, you're right, let's not ...

But as he is going off to bed, Harry stands in the doorway, a glass of brandy in his hand.

> He couldn't bear to put off what had been at the back of his mind while we talked, just as it had at mine, and now he delivered a monologue, in a hot, angry, frustrated bitter voice, and it was exactly the same as the one I had listened to only last night, on the plane, from the race-horse breeder.
>
> "Your precious Africans ..."

This diatribe becomes so familiar that Lessing quietly dubs it "The Monologue." In its canonical form, The Monologue refers not to "Your precious Africans" but to "The Affs"; dilates upon the absurdity of the name of Canaan Banana, the first president of Zimbabwe; observes that "they" don't know how to make anything—television, democracy, anything—work; talks of leaving for "The Republic" of South Africa (this is before the release of Mandela); and ends, as Harry does, with: "They're inferior to us, and that's all there is to it."

In response to problems in his business—lost white customers, newly empowered black workers—Harry has decided to do what many white Rhodesians did both before and after independence: he is going to "Take the Gap." ("White people," Lessing explains, "who left Southern Rhodesia, and then Zimbabwe, for The Republic, 'Took the Gap.'" She does not know where the phrase came from.) Lessing says that "looked at impersonally, and I certainly had been forced to do that, my brother was interesting from a cultural point of view." But it is also clear that, in 1982, his psyche was, like many white Rhodesian psyches, deeply wounded.

The historical processes that led to Zimbabwean independence—and which therefore allowed her to return—included an extremely bloody civil war in which the government's black armies, led by whites, fought against the freedom fighters of Robert Mugabe's ZANU and Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the whites who lost so recently were, in 1982, still resentful and unhappy. What is slightly more surprising is that the blacks, whose frank oppression was the aim of the war, and who lost friends and families to its brutality, seem largely to have been released by victory from the necessity of resentment.

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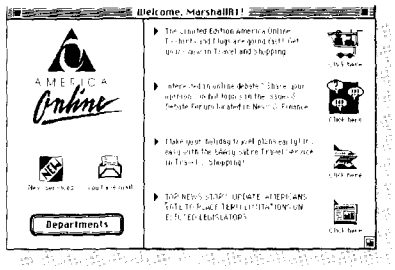

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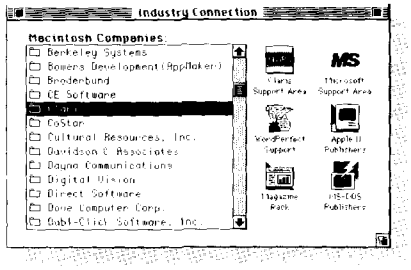

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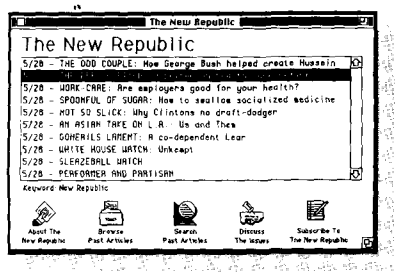
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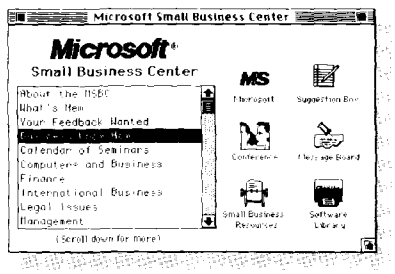

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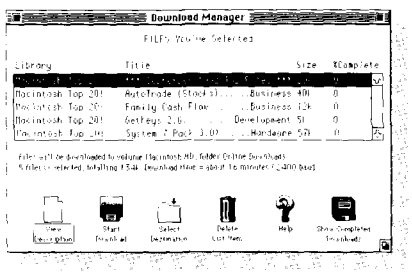

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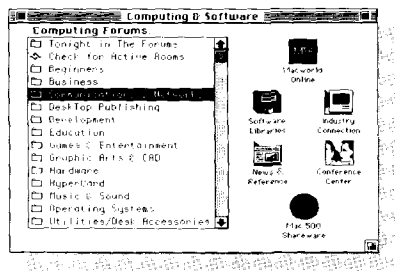

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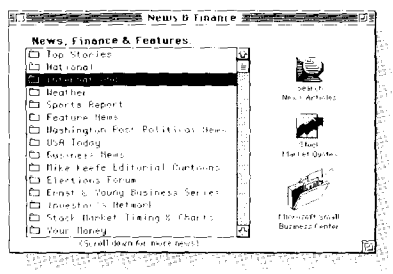

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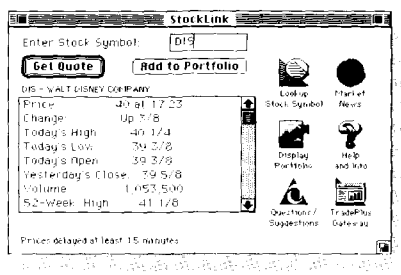

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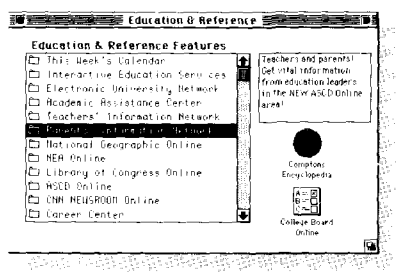

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The recognition of how damaging the war has been to the white psyche comes upon Lessing suddenly. She is talking to her brother about his conversion to a form of fundamentalism preached by his son, a young man who fought during the war against the freedom fighters (or "terrs," short for terrorists, as the whites tend to call them in their abbreviating patois). "Suddenly I understood something: ... What my brother and my father had in common was not genes: at least, genes were not why both were slow, hesitant, cautious, dream-logged men who seemed always to be listening to some fateful voice only they could hear: they were both men hurt by war." The war in the bush was for Harry what the First World War had been for his father.

Harry, like Doris, mourns the loss of the bush, the death of the old ecology. As he talks of Taking the Gap, he tells his sister that "at least" he "won't have to watch" the bush "being destroyed here." The genuine love for the bush—and for farming with the land, not against it—is clearly something that Lessing understands very well, even if she is not "the right kind of Rhodie." She records, again and again, the conversations of white people truly in love with the land:

> If The Monologue in its various forms was boring, and you wished only to be somewhere else as it started up again—again, again—when these people talked about farming techniques, it was a very different thing. These reformed pirates and land-grabbers know about inventions and discoveries from every part of the world. They experiment, they innovate, they wonder if tree-planting in Scotland or the thousands-of-years-old tricks used to wring water from deserts being used by Israel could be applied to Zimbabwe. They discuss wind power, solar power, water-screws from the Middle East and Egypt, new ways of building dams, the introduction of drought-resistant plants from semi-deserts, the control of pests by other pests or helpful plants, the farming of eland instead of cattle.

Indeed, Lessing's first rebuke to the new African government is that, in spreading rumors, during the war, that "making contour ridges to stop erosion" and "compulsory dipping of cattle" were sinister plots by whites "to undo the blacks," Mugabe, and his "Comrades in the bush," said "things that were less than intelligent." In taking up, for herself, this theme, Lessing is explicitly borrowing an element of The Monologue.

> ... I sat in cars, being driven through areas crowded with every kind of shack, hut, shanty, each surrounded by straggling mealies and a few pumpkins. The earth was eroding into gullies, the trees were being cut for fuel. Who drove me? Explosive, splenetic whites.
>
> "Just look at that, look at it, there won't be any soil left..."

Lessing is willing to be seen agreeing with these splenetic bigots because she is convinced that, about this, they are right. Complexity rules.

Lessing's second trip since independence was six years later, in 1988. Much had changed. For a start, the two black parties in the Zimbabwean parliament had amalgamated. At the same time, Lessing says, political corruption had spread everywhere. She quotes a U.N. official: "It is not exactly unknown for the victorious side in a civil war to line their pockets, but Zimbabwe is unusual in creating a boss class in less than ten years and to the accompaniment of Marxist rhetoric." You can tell this is Lessing, however, because the next paragraph goes on: "But reading newspapers from Zimbabwe, listening to travelers' tales, what came across was not the flat dreary hopelessness of Zambia, the misery of Mozambique, but vitality, exuberance, optimism, enjoyment."

In the 1980s Zimbabwe did create a class of bosses—or "Chefs," as they were called in contrast to the "Povos," or the poor (a word from the Portuguese picked up by the guerrillas when they were hiding out in Mozambique during the civil war). But in those first few years after independence, the Marxist rhetoric went with a real sense of nationalist excitement. As Lessing tells it, this feeling was shared by many, black and white.

On the verandas, where a few years earlier she had listened to the "explosive, splenetic whites," she now listens to a group of Zimbabweans (black or white, she does not say), some of them supporters, during the bush war, of Mugabe, some of Nkomo, some of Bishop Muzorewa. "Every conversation at once turns to the Unity Accord, between ZAPU and ZANU, Matabeleland and Mashonaland, Mugabe and Nkomo, the Accord which has transformed the atmosphere, everyone optimistic, everyone saying, 'At last Zimbabwe is one country.'" These people talk of Mugabe with "idealism, of a kind frightening to people"—like Lessing—"who remember similar talk about despotic leaders." They ask, "Why doesn't President Mugabe stop the corruption?" They say, "Mugabe says ..." and tell Mugabe stories. "I swear this isn't far off being in love."

Because this is like love, they will not listen to Lessing when she points out that eight years is not long after a destructive war; that corruption is to be found everywhere. The particular form this love took in Zimbabwe was "the naivest, most untutored enthusiasm for communism. The newspapers printed nothing critical of Communist countries. The Gorbachev revolution was hardly mentioned."

In 1971, long before Zimbabwean independence, Lessing had written in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*: "I had an old thought ... that no matter what changes of government or what names were given to a nation's system of organization, there was always the same flavor or reality that remained in that place." Now she notices the continuities between the old Rhodesia and the new Zimbabwe, and the same Herodotean environmentalism suggests itself:

> Sometimes one is tempted to believe that the mental attitudes of a country have something to do with its sun and soil. Old Southern Rhodesia was the same, complacently indifferent to the outside world. Leaving it was like leaving a stunned or a drugged country. The only comparable places are in certain midwestern states in America, where curiosity about the world ends at, let's say, the borders of Iowa or Nebraska. A university audience will hardly know where Afghanistan is—or Sri Lanka, or Pakistan. In California, sun-drugged youngsters will stare at the mention of Gorbachev.
>
> Similarly, Zimbabwe. You may spend an evening with a professor of history, or of literature, whose attitudes toward the Soviet Union or China are identical with those of thirty years ago.

This strange blindness—rooted in the soil of Rhodesia-Zimbabwe—produces from Lessing her own Monologue. She "grew up when 'everyone' was a Communist"; she can recognize, as a result, in the Communist politicos the "scarcely concealed glitter of mendacity, the pride at cleverness that knows how to outwit opponents with election rigging, or the fixing of statistics, character assassinations, the whole 'bag of tricks.'"

In the records of Lessing's later trips, in 1989 and 1992, we see the decline of Zimbabwe. The enthusiasm of the mid-'80s is eaten away by corruption and economic decline. By the end even she is finding it hard to keep a balanced view. "During a game of Epitaphs, it was decided there was only one possible epitaph for Robert Mugabe: 'A good man fallen among thieves.'" Perhaps Lessing is right. I

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have not been to Zimbabwe since the mid-'80s. Then I saw what she saw: the excitement of a bustling new nationalism. It seems to me that I still hear some of that excitement from Zimbabwe. Things may not have been going well, but this is still a country that believes, in its new multiracial incarnation as in its old racialist one, in its own election. Robert Mugabe and the Chefs may have settled into the depressing rituals of a one-party state; cynicism may have seeped into more of the increasingly impoverished crevices of Zimbabwean life: but here and there remain these strange—perhaps even dangerous—pockets of faith.

Because she has so little taste for politics, I do not quite trust Lessing's political judgment. Indeed, it is her overwhelming hostility to politics that accounts for many of the moments when her touch seems not quite certain. "So bullied are we all by ideologues," Lessing complains at one point, "it is hard to say the Africans have anything whites do not, or that we have anything they do not, but the fact is, up and down Africa, as travelers have always averred, they enjoy themselves." The trouble with this notion (which provides her book's title) is not that it is politically incorrect, but that it is sentimental and fatuous. (They have, after all, been known to enjoy themselves "up and down" Europe, too.) Similarly, many of Lessing's complaints about Zimbabwean political rhetoric seem utterly oblivious to the task of politics: to the problems of building national solidarity in the fragile landscape left by civil war.

What we learn from this book, then, is not so much the political history of Zimbabwe in its first dozen years, but the psychic history of Southern Rhodesia, the inner history of the white settlers and what has become of them: the best of this book is the white man's story. And none the worse for that. But there is a different story to be told; and the people who tell it will be writers like Tsitsi Dangarembga, author of *Nervous Conditions*, as fine a novel as the subcontinent has produced in recent years, a novel for which Lessing herself declares her admiration. Dangarembga began life in a peasant family; and one need hardly add that she is black. There is no question that she could tell the story of black Zimbabwe from the inside. She has already begun to do so.

In 1982 at the Harare show—the big trade fair and, in the past, like the Salisbury Show, a great event for white society—Harry meets an elderly white woman who has been to visit South Africa. "I've been in The Republic to have a look. But I'm sticking it out here. They're a nice lot compared with there. You can always have a good laugh with our Affs." This, Lessing's book suggests, is what most white Zimbabweans were like back then, when they were feeling well-disposed toward their black fellow citizens: condescending, bluff, complaining. Not a pretty picture. But on their verandas, with their dogs and their children and their immense hospitality toward each other, they have their attractions—if, that is, you can forget, for a moment, about the black men and women who serve their vast meals and work in the landscape beyond the lawn. Anachronistic and absurd, to be sure; but also, in their sense of community, admirable.

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The Last Judgments

BY LAWRENCE LIPKING

A History of Modern Criticism, 1750–1950 by René Wellek

(Yale University Press, 8 vols., vols. 1-4 out of print, vol. 5 $17 paper, vols. 6-8 $45 each)

Literary criticism is not what it used to be. Forty years ago, when René Wellek began his monumental history of modern criticism, the power of critics inspired respect and even fear. Like the brooms of the sorcerer's apprentice, they seemed irresistible in their advance. Stanley Edgar Hyman hailed the armed vision of the modern warrior critic, and Randall Jarrell grumbled that an Age of Criticism had taken over reading and writing. A generation before, American critics had struggled for a foothold in the universities, where literary history held sway. Now their campaign had prevailed. Critics occupied good academic jobs and fortified ivied strongholds. When they spoke, they expected the world of letters to listen.

Today it is easy to look back at that time with irony as well as nostalgia. The military metaphors of postwar criticism betray a dubious fascination with authority and how to get it. Many critics had served in the armed forces; top brass appealed to them. In retrospect, scholars who came of age in the 1960s now often refer to the "hegemony" of the New Criticism and regard the critical vanguard of the 1940s and '50s as offspring of the cold war—a sort of academic intelligence agency, decoding texts in the interests of showing that every good poem secretly advocates a system of private enterprise. Whatever the truth of this account, it does suggest that criticism once mattered. To view the old New Critics as a power elite, training a nation of tractable readers to march in step, is to credit them with more influence than American intellectuals are used to. Nowadays most critics side with the outcast. Having lived so long in guerrilla country, they do not want or know how to come down to the plains. No wonder that they feel so distant from a generation when many critics identified with the center.

Moreover, history seemed to agree with critics then. However much they quarreled with one another, they shared a sense of tradition. The first two volumes of Wellek's history, published in 1955, joined a timely enterprise, along with W. J. Bate's anthology, *Criticism: The Major Texts* (1952), the collection of essays edited by R. S. Crane, *Critics and Criticism* (1952) and Wimsatt and Brooks's *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (1957). Collectively these works ratify the field and award it tenure. They concur on only one point, but it is a decisive point: criticism does have a history.

Such a claim could not be taken for granted. George Saintsbury's classic three-volume *History of Criticism and Literary Taste* (1900-4), for instance, had not pretended to deal with any coherent body of knowledge. Instead Saintsbury sampled the vintages of critical sensibility as, in his epicurean *Notes on a Cellar-Book*, he would savor a fine old port. He was an *amateur* of criticism, as Wimsatt and Brooks maintain, a connoisseur who never bothers with their own first principle of "continuity and intelligibility in the history of literary argument." In this respect even the great Erich Auerbach identified with the amateur. Reviewing

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Wellek's first two volumes, Auerbach expressed doubts that the history of criticism could ever be a unified subject; critics had always responded to texts and issues of their moment, not to any continuing conversation. Yet the new historians of criticism refused to accept that verdict. They were professionals, the heirs of Aristotle and Longinus, and not only the past but the future belonged to them.

The rise of criticism reached its apogee with Northrop Frye. In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Frye sharply distinguished the varieties of taste from "genuine criticism," which "progresses toward making the whole of literature intelligible." A critic ought thus to aim at a systematic structure of knowledge or "assumption of total coherence." No critic has ever had higher ambitions. And though most other critics disputed Frye's system, they liked the pinnacle where he had put them.

When the Modern Language Association published a guide for apprentice scholars in 1963, it concluded with Frye's essay on literary criticism. There students could find the end of their labors. After linguistics, textual criticism and literary history, Frye offered "a further stage in the scholarly organization of literature," a field that completed and complemented literature itself. It sounded quite scientific, not to say heady. Criticism now had something to do. In the spell of the moment, some idealistic young people had a dream that few young people had ever dreamed before: they fantasized about being critics when they grew up.

In 1981, when the MLA brought out a revised version of its introduction to scholarship, I wrote the essay on literary criticism. This was a comedown for criticism. Not only had it lost much of its glamour, it had lost its position at the end of the volume. The new star, of course, was "Literary Theory," where dreamers and groupies had gone. Nor did the change leave criticism intact. The province of literary criticism, as Frye had envisaged it, clearly encompassed theory as well as practice. Now theory had grown too independent to share its sphere of influence. When Paul de Man and I divided the territory of the two essays, we agreed that my turf would have to be "practical criticism," a term already long out of fashion. I had to make the best of a diminished thing: the analysis and the interpretation of works of literature.

But de Man and theory wanted that, too. The essay that he produced, "The Resistance to Theory," turned reading itself into a function of theory, above all when the reader tries to resist the instability of language that undoes every quest for meaning and value. In these terms criticism is reduced to one instance—and not a particularly interesting one—of the resistance to theory. (The most interesting one is theory itself.) Critics, with all their "pragmatic banality," would have to make way for more rigorous methods.

The MLA committee did not accept de Man's essay. When published elsewhere, however, the essay became more famous, and probably more often taught, than any other assigned for the volume. Meanwhile the visibility of criticism continued to fade. In the current edition of *Introduction to Scholarship* (1992) the number of essays has multiplied from six to fifteen, but literary criticism has disappeared; it rates no essay at all.

What accounts for this glaring omission? Many older critics might surmise, in an elegiac mood, that criticism has wasted away or that its great tradition has been snapped. Wellek deliberately ends his history in 1950. After that date, he explains, a new set of "isms" replaced the field he had known, and writers like de Man and Roland Barthes exchanged the study of literature for the problematics of language.

Perhaps the time of criticism is over. I do not think so. The quantity and the quality of literary criticism have not declined. Recent critics of Homer and Shakespeare and Woolf have seen into their works just as deeply as the best critics did in the past. Contemporary poetry is reviewed just as well, or as badly, as ever. And despite the smoke of the canon wars that drifts across the field, the keen attention paid to formerly marginalized writers has remarkably expanded the horizons of criticism as well as of literature. On a clear day, a sanguine literary critic might perceive a golden age.

Yet no one seems prepared to bask in that sunshine. Critics now practice their instruments mostly behind closed academic doors. Many of the figures discussed by Wellek—Charles Maurras and Jean-Paul Sartre, Benedetto Croce, Miguel de Unomuno and José Ortega y Gasset—tried to shape the mind and conscience of their nations. Their criticism struck sparks of fury and love; it spoke to public concerns, and the public listened. In America, most people who cared about culture and books used to read Edmund Wilson and Lionel Trilling. Today no critic is given such respect. Indeed, the few literary critics who do reach a wide public tend to be regarded, in academic circles, as lightweight or out of touch with the cutting edge. Nor do most scholars listen to what they say. The main reason for the absence of criticism from *Introduction to Scholarship*, I suspect, is that nobody noticed it was missing. Unlike theory or gender or cultural studies, the present state of criticism does not stir up passions.

Another reason for the omission, however, might be a faint discomfort with the associations of literary criticism. Somehow the term seems so ... judgmental. "Literary Interpretation," the substitute term, steers clear of preferring some texts to others or of hinting that certain poems might not be worth reading. All writing is grist for the interpreter's mill; as Freud convinced us, slips of the pen count, too. But critics are notoriously choosy. They pick out favorite pieces and brush off the rest. Confronted with something new or from another culture, they cannot be stopped from asking, "Is it any good?" Today this attitude seems archaic, if not actually illegal. Wellek called one collection of his essays *Discriminations*. Only someone with a long memory will recall a time when everyone wanted to be thought the sort of person who discriminates. These days scholars sign oaths that they will not do it.

Moreover, literary critics tend to be individualists. Uncomfortable with schools of thought, they like to play hooky from prevailing orthodoxies, and often flaunt their quirks. While some, like Frye, build systems, most delight in tearing them down. Almost every great critic whom I have known—R. P. Blackmur, Kenneth Burke, William Empson—has been magnificently one of a kind. The same might be said of Johnson and Coleridge, who attracted many admirers but few disciples. Today such critics as Hugh Kenner and Harold Bloom, for instance, are singular; they go their own way. That makes them hard to place.

It also puts them out of touch with prevailing theories. The most influential current schools proclaim the power of institutions or structures of knowledge to shape minds whose very sense of agency runs on the track laid down by culture. We see what the blinders constructed for us permit us to see. Hence authors are dead, replaced by author functions, and selves are dead, replaced by subject positions, and personal meanings are dead, replaced by discursive formations. Within this grand design, the individual tastes of critics shrink to historical static—random variations tossed off by the system. Preferring one product to another only reinforces the mar-

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ket as a whole. The value of critics, therefore, depends on what they represent, the interests or discourses they serve. One of a kind will never beat a full house.

For all these reasons, the heyday of criticism now seems a thing of the past. Hardly any young person dreams about becoming a critic. Nor is Wellek's history designed to kindle such dreams. Instead it chronicles what literary criticism used to be: the exercise of personal judgment and knowledge, the acts of mind that keep literature alive, a continuing conversation between the past and the present. Most theorists love the future; implicitly they promise a way out of the old morass of dead ideas. Critics tend to be less forward-looking; they throw a lifeline to any text that seems worth preserving. Wellek's history holds on to principles of earlier generations, and refuses to concede that good criticism can ever be wholly outmoded.

Above all, Wellek's work, now complete with the publication of the eighth volume, is a tribute to individual initiative. The sheer amount of information that these volumes contain, the marathons of reading in many languages, the abundance of evaluations, the variety of responses, the chronological and geographical breadth, the range of references, the command of detail: all hark back to an age of scholarly giants. Today such a project would employ a team or a battalion of experts, each assigned a tiny part of the whole. But no committee wrote Wellek's history; it bears the imprint of the one person who could have conceived it and put it together, a person who views the history of criticism as a context for the story of his life.

The relation between critical ideas and the individual critics who have generated them is the ground on which this history is built. One critic at a time holds center stage. Most readers will probably start with the index, approaching the work as a biographical dictionary or a reference guide to terms. There is no better way to handle the wealth of Wellek's information. But the work as a whole accumulates a different kind of interest, more peculiar and more close-knit. During much of the half century of criticism described by the last four volumes, Wellek himself was an active participant. He helped found the Prague school of criticism, argued with Leavis, fraternized with Mario Praz and observed the rise and decline of New Criticism firsthand. Thus the historical record is intertwined at every stage with reflections from the historian's own career. Even figures from an earlier generation, like Croce and Valéry, remain alive to Wellek through common acquaintances or successors. These volumes do not indulge in many anecdotes and reminiscences, but they do stay very close to the past.

The awareness of individual differences also gives the history its special character. Wellek tries hard to appreciate each critic in terms of a specific time and place and set of influences, and refuses to impose a single standard of criticism and theory on the ragged landscape of changing ideas. Nor will he choose between theory and practice. As the author (with Austin Warren) of *Theory of Literature* (1949), he has sometimes been accused of setting off the boom in theory, even of crusading for the one right way that all other critics ought to follow. It is true that Wellek believes, unlike many other historians, in the importance of systematic principles, and condemns the vagrant relativism that he sees around him. But *A History of Modern Criticism* embraces many points of view and finds some good in almost everyone. Eclecticism, not dogmatism, is the danger with which it flirts.

Indeed, much of the sympathy of these books goes out to critics who fall between the cracks—too serious for popularity, too practical for theoreticians. These neglected figures supply the history with most of its surprises and perhaps its heroes: W.C. Brownell, John Middleton Murry, Max Kommerell, Albert Thibaudet. Anthologies ignore such critics, too eclectic to found a school or to be passed down to posterity through a few catchphrases. Wellek gives them plenty of space, and their stubborn devotion to literature brings out all his eloquence. Thus Thibaudet's historicism

> recognizes all the fantastic variety of the world and enjoys it in its conflicts and contradictions.... It is a view of literature and the world that is still immensely fruitful for its understanding, however much it may run counter to the fanaticisms, the limited preoccupations and the possibly profounder metaphysics of our time.

A good historian, like a good critic, is enriched, not destroyed, by the tangle of purposes brought to light in his work. Here Wellek champions the independent voice. Clearly he is speaking about himself.

Yet Wellek's values do not make his job easy. Respect for individuality can work against the effort to define the collective assumptions of an age. The pieces of this history do not add up, nor do they claim to fit into a larger, evolutionary pattern. Even the convenient national grouping of the volumes, with French, Italian and Spanish saved for last, discourages any search for the international style of modern criticism, where so many hybrid ideas have been grafted on native stock. Wellek himself has traveled from culture to culture. A citizen of comparative literature, he seems at home almost anywhere in Europe or America, and jingoism offends his cosmopolitan spirit. But nations, like individuals, mostly go their own ways in these books. No one story or set of problems binds them together.

What does remain consistent, however, is a demand for evaluation. Wellek

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Peace with Egypt is the coldest possible. For its agreement to make true peace with Israel, Egypt received the huge Sinai Peninsula in which Israel had invested over $10 billion. It had created flourishing cities, some of the most advanced military and naval installations in the world, and had developed oil fields that would have made it energy independent for the foreseeable future. Without firing a shot, Egypt received all of this, plus generous grants from the United States—$40 billion to date. What Egypt gave in return was a piece of paper. And even that was hedged. It would allow Egypt to join in an "Arab War" against Israel. The peace between Israel and Egypt, which the Israelis had envisioned to be like the peace between Germany and France, turned out, unfortunately, to be the "coldest peace" possible. It is, less of a peace than a de facto state of non-belligerence. The Israeli ambassador in Cairo is isolated and blacklisted and does not participate in any official functions of the Egyptian government. There is practically no trade between the two countries and no cultural exchange. The public sector of Egypt, which constitutes 80% of the total economy is forbidden to do business with Israel. Private enterprises are actively discouraged and often threatened when they try to become engaged with Israeli firms. Israeli firms are barred form submitting tenders for local projects. For "security reasons" Israeli firms are not allowed to participate in trade fairs. Although quite a few Israelis visit Egypt, hardly any Egyptians go to Israel since those who do wish to visit are summoned to the security police for lengthy interrogation.

Not forthcoming on diplomatic front. Many Israelis have been killed in Egypt or on the Egyptian border. The Egyptian media, including the official and semi-official press, are full of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish venom, preaching hatred and prejudice. There have been numerous instances of "crazed" Egyptian soldiers shooting up Israeli buses traveling along the border highways, to the general applause of the state-controlled media. On the diplomatic front, the Egyptians aren't any more forthcoming. Egypt spearheaded the campaign to keeping the "Zionism is racism" resolution in the U.N., contrary to U.S. wishes. Egypt exerts much effort to prevent African countries from establishing or renewing diplomatic relations with Israel. Egyptian diplomats, including Butros-Butros Ghali, now secretary general of the United Nations, lobbied fervently against the loan guarantees that Israel needed to absorb and to settle the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who have already arrived or will still arrive form the former Soviet Union.

> "Israel's present government must be commended for proceeding with the greatest caution in the current peace negotiations."

The saving grace for Israel in its very cold peace with Egypt is that the Sinai is very large, and serves as a buffer zone. But in the Golan Heights, which the Syrians wish to have returned in exchange for "peace", and the "West Bank" and Gaza, which the Palestinians whish to have given to them as a "reward" for stopping the "intifada", there is no room at all for buffer zones. Although autonomy for the native Arab population is definitely an Israeli policy goal and a commitment under the Camp David Accords, the "West Bank" and Gaza and the Golan cannot possibly be surrendered to another sovereignty for any foreseeable future. It would make Israel totally indefensible. If the peace with Egypt is an example of what peace with Syria or with the Palestinians would look like, Israel's present government must be commended for proceeding with the greatest caution in the current negotiations and not to entrust its survival to empty promises. Only when the Arabs truly accept Israel as part of the Middle East should any further "land for peace" adjustments be considered.

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judges critics and he expects critics to judge. To appreciate or censure, to cull and sort and rank, to distinguish art from non-art, to choose and give reasons for choosing, to respond with one's whole being are what a critic does. Value judgments, in any case, cannot be avoided. "The ideal of a neutral scientific objectivity in literary studies is simply a chimera, a delusion," and so is the ideal of a totally impartial history of criticism. On Wellek's last visit with Praz, they "talked about reputations, fame and Nobel Prize winners." Praz "contemptuously brushed off" the nonentities and the local idols who often win the prize, and singled out *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as "a book without parallel." That story serves as Praz's memorial, the testament that he never stopped making judgments. He was Wellek's kind of critic.

The stress on evaluation has serious consequences for Wellek's history. It helps determine not only his favorite critics, but also whom he will take in. Since the notion of literature itself depends on valuing works of art above other sorts of writing, a literary critic must, by definition, uphold some standards of art. This criterion alone would eliminate many currently influential critics. After careful study of Georges Poulet, "the most representative and impressive figure in twentieth-century French criticism" (surely no small accolade!), Wellek concludes that "Poulet's work is not literary criticism, though most of his evidence is drawn from literature. It does not allow any judgment and does not consider a single work of art as a totality." The literary gate is strait. Those who have fattened too much on philosophy, religion or politics cannot wriggle through it. Hence other modes of thought continually fray true literary standards. Much of Wellek's history wrestles with this problem, and even its cutoff date suggests some skepticism about the survival of literature and literary criticism in an age when nothing seems to be specially valued.

The example of Wellek's own judgment does not do much to solve the problem. The critic we come to know in these volumes has old-fashioned virtues. Generous, cultivated, alert and wide-ranging, he manifests the strong good sense he seeks in other critics. But these are not the virtues most in demand in modern criticism. It is true that Walter Benjamin often distorts the texts he writes about; that Mikhail Bakhtin proposes a rigid definition of genres; that Jean-Paul Sartre's view of poetry is anti-aesthetic; and that all these critics run to extremes. Yet those who prize their work

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do not niggle at lapses from common sense. Often the very passage that at first seems most preposterous eventually opens the way to a new understanding.

Such critics pull readers into their own gravitational field of discourse, suspending judgment. But their magnetism does not attract Wellek. He gives praise where it is due, but he keeps his distance. Even his vocabulary shuns extremes; he holds each critic to "norms" and blames the "odd" or "eccentric" opinion. When a critic's views appear very peculiar, Wellek is refreshingly unashamed to admit that he does not understand them, and implies that the fault is not his but the critic's. All this makes perfectly good sense. But "normal" has become a fighting word. In the absence of consensus, the abnormal critic might well be redefined as the deconstructively challenged. The classic texts of modern criticism are not content, by and large, to embody the values of their era. Instead they savage literary norms.

In one important respect, in fact, the values of this history fail to do justice to its own achievement. Taking Wellek's volumes at their word, we might suppose them a failure. Literary criticism is not what it used to be. It is harder than ever to define or to keep separate from other kinds of discourse. It has lost the shared sense of values and principles that once enabled critics to set firm standards. It seems powerless to defend against the attacks on literature. And its own historian cannot discern much coherence, let alone progress, in the story that he tells. The past seems to be receding, and the future is dark.

But Wellek's work is better than that. If criticism escapes definition, so be it. Perhaps too much time has already been wasted on the abstract question of what is literature and who is worthy to man its barricades. The energy, the variety and the humanity displayed by Wellek ought to be enough. Nor have they gone out of style. Indeed, one final reason why literary criticism has lost its glamour, as well as its armed vision, may be that there is now so much of it. Something that anyone can do is hard to value. In an age when everyone is free to be a critic, the trade of judging has suffered from a surplus of homemade goods. Most of us do not do it very well. Wellek has shown how many ways have existed, and still exist, of succeeding. His history ought to survive.

LAWRENCE LIPKING is professor of English at Northwestern University and the author of *Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition* (University of Chicago Press).

The Further Travels of Marco Polo

You who would travel in my footsteps,
who come as far as the church no longer a church,
the stone with my name on it no longer there,
who stop at the door in the dirt,

come a little farther, carrying nothing.
Neither letters from the pope, nor gifts,
not even a relic of the Holy Sepulcher,
not even water, nothing I carried

into the desert of deserts is of use now.
On the fourth day you come to a river
of fresh water digging its way underground,
and in its bed lie those stones called precious.

Thinking yourself still thirsty,
knowing yourself still merchant above ground,
you who are weary may stop to weigh yourself down.
If you remain behind, overtaken by sleep

such as you've never known—so very full of dreams,
that desert—you hear yourself called by name
in a tone you remember. From a door in the dark
a voice offers to buy the clothes off your body.

You look down—how did you come to be wearing your best?
Thus the dead amuse themselves. Likewise by day
they assume the appearance of traveling companions
who endeavor to conduct you out of your way,

as I have done, past the meal the living set for you
so lovingly they'll consume it themselves
after you've been offered just the fumes,
your mouth stuffed with pearls.

They wouldn't recognize you, gone so long
they think you're dead. I know. You're free
to marry here, where the wedding is drawn on paper,
bride and attendants in all their finery

shown with horses and other animals,
money, and every article of furniture,
and these, together with the marriage contract,
committed to flames that convey none of this

to the other world. But come a few days farther,
a few years on, where the water is greener
than the grass holding the dirt close overhead.
Water as green as the canals of home

and as bitter. You want to turn back?
You want, like the great khan,
to refuse death an audience?
Death is the lark's tongue you feed

to a prized falcon, death.
Sew enough jewels into the lining of your coat
and the arrows glance off all the way home,
but it's not enough. Take this

and, like a great khan, have it read to you.
I, Marco, whose name is dirt now,
have not told half of what I saw.

DEBORA GREGER

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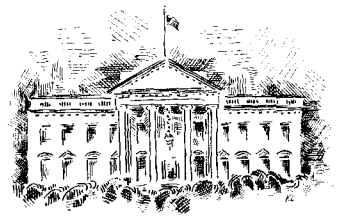
WASHINGTON DIARIST

From shove to push

I WAS RECENTLY THE SUBJECT OF A demographic transition. In a span of seventy-two hours, I went from being a youngish urban-dwelling, apartment-renting white male to being an oldish suburban-dwelling, homeowning white male. Looking back, it is hard to say when pressure toward this tectonic shift began to build. Presumably there was a moment three or four years ago when, sitting in Dupont Circle, amid the stinging humidity and the occasional waft of urine, watching the neighborhood psychotic rant cryptically, I said to myself: the charm of downtown Washington is beginning to fade. Then, a couple of years ago, my daughter was born. Pushing an offspring around in a stroller raises your sensitivity to urban grossness by an order of magnitude. It also gives you the uncomfortable sense of being out of place, unwanted. You start to imagine that people are looking at you and wondering, "Why doesn't he do something *constructive* with his life? You know—sip decaffeinated cappuccino at a sidewalk café, or join a band of marauding youths?" But you can't comfortably sip cappuccino in the company of a screaming infant, and you're too old to join a band of youths. It's time to go.

MIGRATING OUTWARD IS A KIND of surrender, an admission that you're no longer a match for the urban jungle, and I was as defensive about it as the next guy. But once you actually live in the suburbs, the nagging sense of wimpishness vanishes. Suburbs seem designed to instill a convincing, if false, sense of masculinity. To begin with, a stroll in these parts brings you face to face with relatively few males who could easily crush you, and fewer still who seem prevented from doing so only by the threat of legal sanction. So you can maintain a self-assured gait and make easy eye contact with all comers—a great improvement over that rabbity, Don Knottsish demeanor that is appropriate in some urban situations and that marks you plainly as an omega male. Moreover, a newly purchased home is a smorgasbord of pseudo-manly tasks waiting to be performed. Do we need some bookshelves to fit into an odd-shaped cranny? No problem. I'll just head down to the basement and deftly wield my new Black and Decker power saw, my new Black and Decker power drill and a Phillips screwdriver. My wife wants to know if I'll wear safety goggles. I laugh. Those are for kids, honey. (Besides, my Clark Kent glasses cover about 45 percent of my face and have the added virtue of enabling me to distinguish between a two-by-four and my left hand.)

TO BUILD BOOKSHELVES YOU need screws and wood (I mean, screws and *lumber*), and that calls for a visit to a hardware store and a lumber yard. I went to a place that is both: a Hechinger's Home Project Center. This is to be distinguished from a mere Hechinger's hardware store; it is a superstore, like Staples and Office Depot. Only more so. Each aisle is roughly the size of an airplane hangar. And with good reason. Patrons have their choice of pushing around a conventional shopping cart or a flatbed wagon that can accommodate lumber, lawnmowers, etc. These mega-carts are so substantial that when you need to back up a few steps and start pulling one in reverse, you expect to hear it go "beep, beep, beep, beep." By the same token, alas, the carts are unwieldy, especially on the uneven pavement in the lumber section. And nothing is worse for a recently replenished sense of manhood than to be seen at Hechinger's grunting and sweating just to keep half a dozen one-by-twelve pine boards from crashing into a row of clay planters—or, worse still, into the ankles of some construction worker doing his weekend shopping. One minute you're coolly appraising slabs of timber, selectively placing them on your mega-cart, the next minute you're Don Knotts all over again. But I managed to avert a major calamity, and for the most part successfully feigned nonchalance. I came home and built the bookshelves. While building them, I listened to a Baltimore Orioles game on the radio, just for good measure.



MY CONSUMMATE ACT OF MANLIness was to buy a push mower. No, I don't just mean a mower that you don't ride. I mean a mower that derives all necessary energy from whatever you had for breakfast—the kind of mower we had when I was a kid (and which, fortunately, was replaced by a Sunbeam electric before I replaced my older brother as chief lawnmower). My logic was as follows: (1) I'll impress the neighbors with my youthful vigor; (2) I'll get enough exercise so that I don't have to jog at the end of the day to stave off the otherwise certain wave of twilight angst that is such an undesirable feature in an experienced power-saw user; (3) There won't be a one-gallon jug of gasoline in our garage, just waiting to be used by my daughter at a pretend tea party hosted by Barney the Dinosaur; (4) I'll slow down global warming (I assume Al Gore uses a push mower on his suburban spread out on Massachusetts Avenue, and that Dan Quayle used some kind of Winnebago riding mower); (5) A push mower won't cost much. All in all, this logic struck me as so persuasive that I decided push mowers would soon be a major trend among politically correct, safety-conscious, not-quite-middle-aged suburbanites. Remember where you heard it first.

ANYWAY, I BOUGHT the push mower. Only 79 bucks, and it came with a testosterone bonus: it required assembly. (This is a source of pseudo-masculinity with which even apartment dwellers are familiar. Nothing like downing a couple of frosty O'Doul's after a tough day assembling Ikea end tables.) After masterfully placing the screws in the appropriate holes, I was ready to mow. But it was with some apprehension that I proceeded. I wasn't really sure how much force is needed to give a push mower enough velocity to actually cut the blades of grass. I had visions of myself doing weekly re-enactments of the Hechinger's nightmare, nonchalantly struggling furiously. As a precaution, I had scheduled my lawnmowing debut for a weekday afternoon, when the audience would be small. To my pleasant surprise, the mower proved manageable (although it didn't give quite the Astroturf finish that power mowers provide). It was with growing pride that I polished off the back lawn and moved to the front. I was near the apex of my self-congratulation when my next-door neighbor pulled up and got out of his car. He has white hair, so there was reason to expect him to comment on my youthful vigor. He looked at the lawnmower. "Those things are great," he said, seemingly impressed. "Well," I said modestly, "I figured it would build character." He replied, with a dryness I hadn't expected to find in the suburbs, "Yeah, and it also cuts the grass." As he bounded up onto his front porch, he added, "And it doesn't hurt the environment. I use one myself." Oh.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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A view from Washington

TAKE A SHOWER, PAY A TAX

Does America really understand the portentous nature of President Clinton's tax plan for energy? From the time we get up in the morning to the minute we crawl under the covers at night, Americans will be paying more. Alarm clocks will cost more, hot water will cost more and the breakfast we eat will cost more because it takes energy to make them or get them to you. The paper you read will cost more to produce because it takes energy to convert wood to paper, to haul the paper to the printer and to deliver it to your doorstep.

Everyone knows it will cost more to get to work but it doesn't stop there. Your car will cost more because there are several hundred pounds of energy-intensive materials like aluminum, glass, rubber and plastic in the vehicle for trim, windows, panels and parts. It also takes a lot of energy to get the assembly line and production equipment running. The road you drive on will cost more because it is made of materials like concrete that take energy to produce and transport. And then there is steel for frames, bridges, reinforcement and guard rails.

Steel will really be impacted because it takes tremendous amounts of energy to make, shape and move. The problem is it might be cheaper to import it. In fact, that might be true of many manufactured products, which brings us to the point of this discussion.

America has maintained its competitiveness in world markets because of reasonably priced energy. Manufacturing has survived because of low production and transportation costs. Both are components of energy. Take that advantage away and you take away jobs, many jobs, in a lot of different sectors of our economy including steel, airlines, manufacturing, trucking, computing, paper, agriculture, automotive, chemicals and on and on. Conservative estimates place the number of jobs lost at more than 400,000.

If we truly need to sacrifice as President Clinton suggests, let's seriously engage in a discussion about reduced government spending. Let's sacrifice by giving up some taxpayer financed programs. That will keep America on a level playing field with the rest of the world and keep us competitive. Energy has played an enormous role in helping maintain our standard of living. Should we really single it out for taxation? Probably not.

And remember, when you crawl into bed at night it will cost more. Your electric blanket will cost more to make and so will your pillow. The bed is made of wood that took energy to process and uses a petroleum-based acrylic finish. It will cost more. The carpet in your bedroom is a synthetic which costs more, and so on and so on.

Quite literally, take a shower and pay a tax. Think about it.

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